

**Science and Mathematics Education Centre**

**Pedagogic moments: Adventures in relatedness, touch and tact**

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**This thesis is presented for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
of  
Curtin University**

**November 2015**

## DECLARATION

To the best of my knowledge and belief this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgment has been made.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university.

Signature:

Date: 30/10/2015

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to all those who have contributed to my thesis, particularly the parents, teachers, students, Aboriginal friends and colleagues, and my fellow practitioners in Holotropic breathwork, with whom I share my lifeworld.

I especially thank Dr Roya Pugh, my thesis supervisor, who has so generously encouraged, supported, and engaged with me in scholarly dialogue, and has inspired me since the beginning of this interpretive journey. I acknowledge Emma Weitnauer for skilfully and sensitively editing, proofreading, and formatting my thesis.

I have deep gratitude and appreciation for Deborah Gainey, whose love, companionship, humour, and holistic worldview holds and sustains me.

## ABSTRACT

My thesis is an interpretive inquiry that seeks hermeneutic understandings of pedagogic moments through encountering and interrogating my lifeworld. I seek to understand the vitality and art of questioning as a hermeneutic device and the role questioning plays in meaning making.

I question our understanding of mind, self, other, world, and reality that informs our worldview, that creates our world. To do this I explore my preconceptions about research and positivism. I learn to become phenomenological with the help of scholars and teachers who have taken this path of self-discovery before me. I am inspired to take the plunge and practise writing stories from my lifeworld.

I explore ordinary and extraordinary aspects of lived experience that I share with people of my lifeworld, the parents, teachers, students, participants and Aboriginal Elders I encounter. Together we illuminate themes of relatedness, touch and tact that permeate pedagogic moments. Through my writing, I write myself, and my relationship with other into being. I develop a conscious relationship with my lifeworld through my research. I become a dative of manifestation and learn to think the world together for the pedagogic good. I learn that interpretation is both relational and pedagogic at its heart.

My thesis raises questions that take the act of teaching beyond acts of instructional methodology, generative curriculum approaches, or teacher competency training. I pose questions about the nature of pedagogy, and the crucial contribution of dialogue in our everyday pedagogical relating. With Max van Manen I ask, “Can pedagogy be observed and experienced?” My inquiry manifests evidence that pedagogy is something we are and can be, rather than something that we do, and can be definable and replicable in a positivist way (van Manen, 1990, p.12). Though this might suggest pedagogy is ineffable and unteachable, my thesis nevertheless is a tribute to its ineffability — found in relating, touch and tact, and shows pedagogy as a desirable phenomenon for human science research.

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# INTRODUCTION

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## INTENDING: THE CONSCIOUS RELATIONSHIP I HAVE WITH MY RESEARCH

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### **I am Life itself**

You have been a prisoner  
of a little pond  
I am the ocean  
and its turbulent flood  
Come merge with me  
leave this world of ignorance

Be with me  
I will open  
The gate to your love

Rumi.

My thesis is the story of how I develop a conscious relationship with my lifeworld through my research.

Max van Manen tells us that when we do research from a phenomenological perspective we question the way we experience the world and want to know and describe our lifeworld. He reminds us that to know the world is to be in the world. Our research needs to be oriented to the

intentional act of becoming more a part of the world to the extent that we become the world (2014).

My quest is to release myself from our egocentric predicament, where all we can really be sure about is our own conscious existence and the states of that consciousness.

Cartesian traditions dominate our culture (Jardine, 2012; Sokolowski, 2000). As Robert Sokolowski reminds us, “We are told that when we are conscious, we are primarily aware of ourselves or our own ideas. Consciousness is taken to be like a bubble or an enclosed cabinet; the mind comes in a box” (2000, p.9).

My thesis tells how my thinking has moved from being “inside my head” (Sokolowski, 2000, p.9) towards an intending of other (Buber, trans. Kaufmann, 1970). I develop a consciousness of my lifeworld by encountering the things from which I make meaning. My hope is that through intending my lifeworld philosophically, my consciousness — rather than being an awareness of myself, and my own ideas — will reveal to me an understanding of my human capacity to make meaning from the things of the world as they present themselves to me. I become a recipient of how things manifest — a dative of manifestation.

My growing willingness to practice, intend, and develop my human awareness — consciousness — is testament to the transformative nature of my thesis. I learn through personal inquiry, and encounters with the scholarly work of others, to apply a transcendental phenomenological attitude of analysis and interpretation that allows meaning to be revealed to me.

My thesis is a hermeneutic inquiry. I seek to apply new and rich understandings to my work as a human science researcher who is interpretive and autobiographical. I examine and seek to understand my lived experience as an educator, participant, facilitator, scholar, writer and phenomenologist. I explore understandings of mind, consciousness and cognition as relating to the process of “continually bringing forth a world

through the process of living” (Capra, 2002, p. 32). Can we rediscover the depth of our origins?

My thesis is oriented towards selecting, describing, exploring and explicating pedagogic moments that arise in my lifeworld. I observe and experience pedagogic epiphanies that emerge through intending and attending to themes that have become known to me through my writing. van Manen reminds us, “There has been little attempt to pose the question of the nature of pedagogy, to dialogue about the meaning of pedagogy in our everyday lives” (1990, p.142). I make that attempt. I enter into dialogue, to explore the meaning of pedagogy in my everyday life, with the students, teachers and parents who assist me to know my world and understand myself as a pedagogic being.

My hope is that this introduction serves as a hologram of my thesis, as my thesis, in turn, is a hologram of myself, who is a hologram of my world, which is all that *is* — a nested hierarchy of wholes, or holons “made up of parts that are themselves wholes” (Sheldrake, 2012, p.50). My hope is that by encountering this introduction, the reader will encounter me and my community, me in community, and me as community in a world that is inclusional, coherent, dialogic, and is governed by its nature as a living organism (Bohm, 1981; Buber, 1970; Capra, 2002; Goswami, 1993; Laszlo, 2004; Rayner, 2011; Sheldrake, 2012).

My story tells how I move from my positivistic habituated way of being — separate, fragmented, individual, and standing apart from the world, to living, learning, exploring, and describing a world where we know in community, and think the world together for the pedagogic good.

## CHAPTER 1

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### USING GARDEN TO REFLECT MYSELF: SEEING THE WAYS OF MY WAY OF SEEING

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I think we are all looking for something in the garden, and, based on what we already know, we create our own garden. Some of the sophistication of the Chinese gardens, their principles, is probably hard for me to see, since my eyes are influenced by the history I carry with me. Obviously my relationship to the garden is influenced by what I know and by my journey here. I grew up in Denmark, with a Eurocentric view of the world - China was far on the horizon - so I have to deal with the limits of my own understanding. When I go into the garden, I see the garden, but I also see the limits of what I can see; I see the construction of my own way of seeing things. So in a way, I use the garden to reflect myself.

Olafur Eliasson (2015) *Danish artist*

#### **Caught in a vortex of thought: Have we lost sight of our depth in self?**

I am caught in a vortex of thought and belief about who I am in relation to my academic research and writing. I compare my experience to being caught in a vortex in a fast running river. This is a vortex of thought of my own making, supported by years of positivist thinking that prevails in our academic and scientific world. A positivistic worldview carries an implication that knowledge is absolute and that there is a basis for knowledge that has no need to be questioned, or as David Jardine reminds us in *The Descartes Lecture* that our dominant positivist thinking leaves us being satisfied that “Things are the way things are” (2012h, p.9).

A definition of 'vortex' is "A spiral motion of fluid within a limited area, especially a whirling mass of water or air that sucks everything near it toward its center — a place or situation regarded as drawing into its center all that surrounds it, and hence being inescapable or destructive" (thefreedictionary.com). Things in a vortex "are the way things are" (Jardine, 2012h, p.9). They are held in stasis as the forces hold everything in its place through its inward movement.

The vortex as a metaphor for positivist thought can be compared to a place in a river where the current is strong and the water drops steeply causing it to swirl back on itself in a continuous circular motion or holding pattern. We kayakers call this a 'stopper'. Any object that gets caught in a stopper gets swirled around in a circular motion. I learned to fear the parts of the river with huge stoppers. We were taught to avoid them at all costs by either paddling fast enough to clear them, or to simply drag our kayaks around them to return to the river well downstream of their backward pull. We had to learn to read the water. I spent hours being shown what happened to the pattern of water in weirs. I occasionally heard of fatal incidents when unsuspecting kayakers would paddle over weirs and get caught in their hold, unable to escape until they drowned. When caught in a stopper the trick is to relax. There is plenty of air as water mixes with air in its circular motion, the way out is to dive down to break past the vortex and get washed out downstream into the flowing water.

As I watch the behaviour of a river above a weir I see that the water is smooth and inviting, almost luring, as it disappears silently over the steep drop. The water gradually gathers speed the closer it gets to the edge of the drop, until eventually, it tumbles over, swirling around and around, trapping all that goes with it. Ducks swimming above the weir seem to understand they can't afford to get too close to the edge. They frolic and graze leaving a space of several metres as the water starts to move more quickly. Have they learned from experience to stay away from the edge? Do they learn to read the water?

It has taken me so much longer to read the waters of methodology and research traditions than it did to read the water as a kayaker. Did my own

assumptions prevent me from reading such waters? Have I joined the many positivists in being lured by the smooth waters of mechanistic thought that gather speed and promise progress? As we approach the edge, do we get washed into a vortex of circular, definitive, behavioural thought? Can we breathe enough air to believe there is life and movement, however circular, or, are we drowning in our perpetual cycles of fragmentary thought?

If I am in a vortex of thought, am I also part of it? Am I the vortex itself, or, like the kayaker, am I caught in its circular flow to the point that I am trapped and drowning? Am I gasping for breath, as a mixture of water and air is forced into my lungs? Do I have no choice but to eventually inhale deeply as I involuntarily gasp greedily, doing all that I know for survival, in the oxygen-deprived environment? Do I drown in the process?

Or, do I act with all that I know deep within me and counter-intuitively dive down deeply to the roots of the vortex to escape its inward motion, challenge my assumptions, and let myself be spat out of its influence to get washed up downstream on the shores of a different paradigm, a different way of knowing? Do I find greater freedom to think and know? What can I learn from watching the ducks living on the waters above the weir?

Slavoj Žižek warns us of semantic idealism that attempts to understand the Absolute as a self-enclosed matrix.

The Ground is (...) the traumatic Thing, the point of simultaneous attraction and repulsion, which stands for the vortex of Life itself threatening to draw us into its depressive abyss. And does not this pre-predicative vortex of the Real point directly towards the Lacanian *Jouissance*? Does not Schelling himself determine the Real (*das Reale*) as the circular movement of 'irrational' (i.e pre-logical, pre-symbolic) drives which find satisfaction in the very 'meaningless' repetition of their circular path? For Schelling (as well as for Lacan) this Real is the Limit, the ultimate obstacle on account of which every 'semantic idealism,' every attempt to deploy the Absolute as a self-enclosed matrix generating all possible significations of Being, is destined to fail. (1996, p.75)

Are we invited to release ourselves from the repetition of our circular path of sense perception and materialism and find ourselves in authentic, ecstatic relation with infinite dimensions of reality?

The constancy and urgency of my questioning calls me to divert from repeating steps in a circular path of sense perception and materialism. I decide that my questions must take priority in my hermeneutical inquiry. As Hans-Georg Gadamer points out,

To ask a question means to bring into the open. The openness of what is in question consists in the fact that the answer is not settled. It must still be undetermined, awaiting a decisive answer. The significance of questioning consists in revealing the questionability of what is questioned. (1989, p.363)

And so I follow an intentional hermeneutic approach to questioning. A matter in question raises one possible understanding, followed by another and perhaps others, each question leading to a deepening understanding of those that come before it. It occurs as a spiralling. I have clusters of questions occurring at regular intervals, which are bounded by the situation in which they occur. The boundaries are akin to what Gadamer refers to as “horizons” because they occur within concrete lived experiences (ibid.).

### **An interpretive adventure: Hermeneutically interpreting and adventuring into phenomenological thinking and writing**

I tell a story of being a kayaker caught in a vortex in a river, and interpret being caught in a vortex in a phenomenological way as I concurrently explore hermeneutics and phenomenology. I grapple to understand a way of being hermeneutic to release myself from positivist thought. This is an adventure, and a venturing forth, into realms of interpretive inquiry. I play with interpretation, phenomenology and hermeneutics as I open up to my scholarly journey.

#### **Caught in the vortex, a personal account**

There is light all around me and I can no longer work out which way is up. I can hear muffled liquid sounds bubbling and swirling around me. Everything is bright. My world here is so different to the one I left moments earlier when I was still upright on the river, in my kayak. It is all water, light and bubbles of air. I wonder about what to do in a stopper? I don't remember any instructions and

this is so different from the diagrams and dire warnings about stoppers. There is just me here, no sign of my kayak or paddle, and here, underwater, there is no sign of anyone. That whole world of other people has been left behind as I dwell now in watery suspension. This is a timeless place, separate from anything I know. I am not even sure I want to get out. It is strangely familiar here, where I am held and buffeted and swirled around in suspended animation. I have no idea where the top or the bottom is. I will soon need to breathe air. I am not panicking. Yet. I will soon need to make a choice to leave this place, or drown. I gasp for breath, inhaling deeply and greedily. This is all my body knows to survive in this oxygen-deprived place. I will soon need to dive down to escape the holding pattern of the vortex.

Our dominant, Cartesian reductionist, basics-as-breakdown, modern, western worldview and positivist discourse is a vortex that sucks everything near it towards its centre, drawing into its centre all that surrounds it.

We can recall how Jardine (2012h) describes how the dominant (positivist) discourse lulls us into a form of amnesia where we “accept things for the way things are” (p.9). A vortex flow dominates all that gets caught in its sphere to the point that we ‘rest’ in the centre, where the flow is least obvious and yet contains us most strongly, as the circular currents constantly draw us to its centre and holds us there. We are indeed caught in amnesia from which it takes effort to wake up. We are being urged to “wake from our amnesia.” Jardine reminds us that wanting to try to wake up from this amnesiac state is a “life-long task”. He reminds us that we study at graduate school to stop slumbering and to,

...deliberately and bloody-mindedly try to, again and again remember the threads of inheritance that we’re dragging with us, what they have done to us, and how our work gets shaped by those things, whether we know it or not, whether we like it or not, whether we experience it or not, whether we care or not... (p.9)

As a kayaker I chose eventually to dive down and escape the hold the swirling waters had on my body. As a researcher I chose eventually to begin



the process of waking up, to remember my true wisdom, my humanness, and my capacity to make meaning from within my world.

In Plato's *Phaedrus*, Socrates tells us that prior to birth the soul inhabits an ethereal realm where it possesses wings and is privy to true beauty and knowledge. Before being born into this world it sinks down, losing its wings and surrendering to amnesia. If later in life we are to recapture our true wisdom we must do so by recalling some glimpse of our original pristine state, a process of remembering (*anamnesis*) rather than acquiring. (Combs, 2009, Loc 451)

### **A researcher's dilemma: Method, methodology and ways of being**

As I grapple with my research I am forced to encounter my beliefs and understandings about the nature of research, method and methodology. Valerie Bentz and Jeremy Shapiro, "Guide us through the maze of research traditions, cultures of inquiry, and epistemological frameworks that blanket the intellectual landscape" as they introduce us to the art of research in the social and human sciences in *Mindful Inquiry in Social Research* (1998, p.26). I am reminded how positivism prevails in our educational and intellectual institutions and that in spite of much recent philosophical thought challenging and reacting against positivism, "research training and text books in the social sciences are often still based on positivist ideas" (p.26).

My reason for embarking on my thesis springs from my own curiosity and passion for understanding relatedness, being and pedagogy. These are epistemological dilemmas. I do not seek to reach any absolute conclusions and my research does not lend itself to the unrestrained application of a single, natural-scientific method as positivism — "the adoption of a rather limited notion of the scientific method as not only a prescription for conducting research and producing scientific knowledge but a comprehensive worldview, social ideology, and definition of meaning of life" (p.26). Bentz and Shapiro point out that although we, those of us from all walks of life, may not be familiar with the term positivism, "It is an important force in the history of modern culture and, in particular, in the history of intellectual life and research" (p.26).

I am reminded that positivism is not a way of ‘doing’ research, rather, positivism is a philosophical position. Bentz and Shapiro, following Jurgen Habermas (1979), suggest that positivism is a denial of reflection and that a positivistic worldview has no need to reflect explicitly on the philosophical and social conditions of knowledge (p.30). Bentz and Shapiro propose a model of mindful inquiry that supports us as researchers in human science to remain in a reflective mode. If I deny myself an opportunity for reflection, do I deny my selfhood? As Eliasson used the garden to reflect himself, I use my world to reflect myself. I need the methodology of mindful inquiry to remain in a reflective mode.

### My assumptions

My assumptions about research began with my belief that I would be alone. I would have to be a sole researcher where I would be called upon to pit myself against my research questions. I would have to stand apart from my world, to become an impartial observer in search of truth. I would be grappling with a *truth* where I had a chance to prove something, or exonerate myself as a teacher and about teaching. I believed I had to study *how* to *do* research and follow its methods. I believed I had to collect conclusive data and analyse the data in an unequivocal way.

Data had to be hard evidence. Data needed to be rigorous and unrelentingly correct. I needed a huge research sample. I needed to prove something to others and myself in the academic world. My thinking was so entrenched as a result of my experience of the science and method I had learned from my own schooling that I believed any *real* research had to be hard, provable, dry, and unequivocal. I could not then hear, nor was I open to listening to my own wisdom and the wisdom of my supervisors and scholars in the field of social research.

My assumptions held me to ransom. I believed that I had to finally, and reluctantly, succumb to the long, hard, heartless, dry, pointless and hideous task of proving something to myself by adopting a method I did not understand, in order to satisfy criteria for assessment, so that I could jump through the necessary hoops to become an academic with a PhD thesis.

My beliefs and thinking were blinding me to the work that was being introduced to me from Bentz and Shapiro (1998); Jardine, Patricia Clifford and Sharon Friesen (2008); David Rehorick and Bentz (2008), van Manen (1990); Sokolowski (2000); and other scholars in their fields of hermeneutics and phenomenology. My assumptions and beliefs were invisible to me. Even though I had experienced great shifts in ways of knowing and being in my life, I was yet to make the connection between lived experience and my academic research. Dare I be transformed by my own research and released from my positivist thought? If so, when might I have been ready? I read the story of Sandra K. Simpson in Chapter 3 of Rehorick and Bentz's 'Transformative Phenomenology' (2009) who tells the story of her desire to become a phenomenologist and I wondered whether I could become one too. This was engaging for me because phenomenology is about the study of real life experience and includes a reflection on the way we relate, touch, feel, and sense the world we live in. Rehorick and Bentz recover the notion of lifeworld from Alfred Schutz who

called the everyday lifeworld the paramount reality, at once acknowledging that we live in multiple realities and our lives are anchored in the world of everyday life (see Schutz and Luckmann, 1974). Contrary to treating the lifeworld as mundane, Schutz believed that exploring the constitution and organisation of the lifeworld provides a fresh and authentic grasp of human understanding. (2009, p.4)

This notion of lifeworld is one into which I could dare to plunge. It was to offer me a way of being authentic, true to myself, and it could open vistas for fresh understandings about others, the world, and myself. Thus the term lifeworld is one that appears constantly when I clamber upwards to the vantage points from where I can view events of understanding, phenomenologically, reflectively and transcendently.

van Manen teaches us that to begin phenomenological practice we embark on a heuristic writing journey, a journey that responds to our wonderment of something. What shall I write? What sustains me? What questions emerge and ignite my passion? It is then that I am passionate and I have something to share passionately with others. van Manen emphasises that the ordinary might be deeply meaningful.

Even the researcher who is doing the writing may not have yet internalised the true enigmatic and depthful nature of the phenomenological question that he or she is pursuing. As well, the irony is that a common topic may seem very ordinary and shallow, and yet almost any topic hides a depthful question that can make us truly wonder about the meaning of human existence. (2014, Loc 9178)

I might have wondered and been passionate about adventure. Did it warrant my attention for this thesis? Was it not too ordinary and shallow for my academic work? When I began to listen to people like van Manen I could see what could be truly “enigmatic and depthful” about a study that might focus on adventure as a phenomenon and that would raise phenomenological questions that I could pursue. I was to find out much later the irony that a common topic can “make us truly wonder” about the “meaning of human existence”(van Manen, 2014, Loc 9178).

There lay my turning point. Every subsequent draft in my writing was to keep my questions wondrous to me. My task became to draft, and re-draft, and make sense of my writing and re-writing as I delved into stories whilst training to be a hermeneutic phenomenologist. I caught my breath and dived deeply out of the vortex.

van Manen (2014) describes Clark Moustakas’ phenomenological approach as being “heuristic research” (Loc 5304) and suggests his heuristic, and more narrative inquiry, can be recommended over other stricter scientific studies as “the focus is exclusively and continually aimed at understanding human experience. The research participants remain close to depictions of their experience, telling their stories with increasing understanding and insight” (Moustakas, 1994, p.19). van Manen reminds us that Moustakas “describes heuristic inquiry as a transcendental phenomenological process that seeks to ‘illuminate’ or search to find the answer to a question or problem of importance and significance to the researcher” (2014, Loc 5311).

Further, van Manen emphasises the worthiness of heuristic inquiry and questioning (2014, Loc 5311) that inspires writing experimentally about something we hold in wonder and in awe. For me, the questions that come forth take on a kind of metaphorical quality that allows me to liken my

curiosity about something in imaginative questioning about it as I stand back from it, suspend my judgement about it, and see it in new lights of understanding. This is what I believe is the meaning of becoming transcendently aware of the thing that I am holding in my curiosity. As my inquiry proceeds my understanding of what is transcendental is given to me through Sokolowski's contributions (Chapter 13, 2000) especially, when in Chapter 3, I accept his invitation to adopt a transcendental attitude, a philosophical position, where we can suspend judgements and return to the things themselves to shed light on our understanding and ways of knowing (p.186).

I write. I write texts that deal with the practice of adventure to develop insight and understanding of my own human experience. I tell my story to practise researching my lived experience and writing phenomenologically and metaphorically. I adventure in phenomenology by exploring my understanding of adventure. I engage in a transcendental phenomenological process to seek to illuminate and find meaning through my metaphor of adventure. What is it like to adventure? What is an adventure in hermeneutic phenomenology like? What preparation do I need for my adventure? What help and guidance do I need? How will I navigate the uncharted waters of my research? What insights and understandings can I 'bring home' to share with my community and myself?

I take van Manen's advice and write, and re-write stories, endeavoring to take a phenomenological standpoint, and allow the things themselves to reveal meaning that has, until now, been hidden from me.

### **My thesis is an adventure**

The term 'adventure' in the *Oxford Dictionary* is based on the Latin words *adventurus* "about to happen", from *advenire* "arrive", with the verb being "to engage in daring or risky activity" and the noun being "an unusual and exciting or daring experience." My adventure is to research making meaning through pedagogy. It invites me to engage in daring or risky activity. It is a risky undertaking.

It is not because things are difficult that we do not dare; it is because we do not dare that they are difficult.

Seneca, *Roman dramatist, philosopher, & politician (5 BC - 65 AD)*

### **Adventuring: Venturing into hermeneutics**

My lunch of hard-boiled eggs and some cold, congealed, pre-buttered toast that I had saved from breakfast, and my battered flask of instant coffee are packed in my waterproof bag. That's all that will remain waterproof on this trip. I sit in the back of the similarly battered mini-bus with its hard wooden seats running the length of the back, forcing us to travel sideways. The landscape of trees and winding roads rushes and hurtles past the side windows. We are thrown from one side of the bus to the other. The bus swings round the bends of the remote Scottish road.

I feel sick. It's not just being thrown about in the back of a bus that's making me sick. I am scared. I feel the taste of anticipation and a hollow feeling in my belly. The kayaks bounce around on the trailer behind us. Soon we will be in those kayaks. It will be my lunch, in the waterproof bag, and me, bouncing down the rapids. I don't know if I can do this! What if I can't do it? Why did I come here at all? Have I got the skills to get through this without hurting myself? I will be all on my own here. No one else can paddle my kayak but me.

When we adventure we enter unknown places and journey through wild terrain. We navigate new territory and encounter challenges and obstacles we meet on our way. A successful adventure comes to an end. We reach our destination and return to our 'home base'. We can be changed forever by embarking on the adventure journey. We are sometimes reluctant adventurers who are thrust into a journey we did not seek. We can also make great preparation for our adventure journeys. We plan, study, consult and seek advice from those who have gone before us. We learn skills and we learn from our teachers and guides. We hone our skills and get feedback from our teachers before setting forth.

We unload the kayaks and shove our waterproof bags of lunch and other paraphernalia in the end of our boats. The river doesn't look so bad from here and nowhere near as bad as it was in my imagination a few minutes ago. It's cold and we waste no time in getting going.

As I nestle into my familiar kayak I start to feel calmer. I have an affinity with the water and the kayak. At last, I feel at home on the river. I feel the movement of the river beneath me. I respond by balancing and gently moving with my boat as if we are one. This is not so bad. I look around to see how the river welcomes my kayaking companions.

As we enter unknown territory, it is no longer comfortable, predictable or familiar. No amount of preparation gives us insights as to what to expect once we embark. To adventure is to journey. The call to adventure invites us to move away from, begin, and venture forth from familiar ground. We leave known surroundings.

The kayaker is expectant. There is a point of no return when one can no longer see the shore — like a first-time expectant mother who adventures into her journey of childbirth. She can prepare herself by consulting friends and attending classes. She can read how-to books. She can attend a birth. No one, and no amount of advice and information, can completely prepare her for her own experience of giving birth for the first time. What mental, physical and emotional challenges will she have to face? Maybe she wishes she could avoid going through with or facing the challenges of giving birth. She gets to the point in the journey where there is no possibility of return. Kayaker and mother are committed. They have left the safe shores of familiar ground.

### **Leaving my own safe shores**

There are grade four rapids downstream. The rapids are complicated and I need to read the water and figure out how to get through. The rapids are long and stretch right into the gorge that can swallow us up if we enter its jaws. I don't know if I can do

this! What if I can't do it? Why did I come here at all? Round in my head I go. Have I got the skills to get through this without hurting myself? I will be all on my own here. No one else can paddle my kayak but me. I have left the safe shores of familiar territory.

I bounce and crash and negotiate huge boulders and standing waves and complicated rapids, and surprise myself as I keep up with my companions and manage to stay in my kayak for the first part of the journey.

Then comes the gorge. We get out and 'inspect', another word for buying time before we have to submit ourselves to the roaring monster. We look at the entry point and agree to keep left down the first rapid, break out, break in, catch the eddy, slip past the death-trap trees that lie right across the current and threaten to trap us underwater, and then...We are on our own. Once we enter the gorge, most of which is out of sight, 'just hang in there' and if you capsize, 'hang on to your boat and paddle.'

It is frightening and uncomfortable to be in the midst of an adventure journey when all our faculties are being challenged. The kayaker is on her own once she enters the jaws of the gorge. The birthing mother enters her own 'gorge' as her body changes physically and biochemically to squeeze, crush, open and prize apart in order for her to deliver her child.

It is sometimes terrifying to venture forth. We cannot predict the outcome. We can prepare for adventure but we can't plan to adventure. The adventure journey is unknown to us. The territory lurks too far away from our knowing to tell us how it will be.

The kayaker notices the taste of anticipation and hollowness in her belly. The expectant mother cannot go back and retreat from what lies ahead. Does she also know anticipatory fear? Does she expect childbirth to be painful as she is subjected to forces she has not yet experienced?

Rock climbers call the most tricky and committing parts of a climb 'the crux'. It is where the climber has to totally commit themselves and their bodies to a series of moves. It is the point of no return. The climber is



required to focus and draw on their strength, skills and courage in order to move further. We cannot practise the crux. We have to approach it and consider what resources we have available to us and then just go, into the unknown. Once we are there we have to keep going, drawing on all our faculties and presence of mind and body until we reach safer ground. We have to get through to the other side and emerge from our adventure journey.

An adventure is risky. We are called to accept the challenge to take risks if we are to adventure. We can hold back and stay home. Sometimes we have no choice. The about-to-be-born child has no choice but to be born. They too have reached the point of no return and have to journey through and to unknown places. Does the unborn child hear the call to adventure? Do they know that their home since conception will no longer house them?

We are sometimes cast out of our homes. Our homes become under threat and can no longer house us comfortably and safely. Frodo Baggins from the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, Luke Skywalker from *Star Wars* and countless other mythical heroes and heroines face threat and danger before they are enticed away from their secure home environments.

It's my turn to go. Here I go. No more time to plan or strategise, just go, and hope I get through this in one piece. The roar of the rapids is deafening. It seems impossible to avoid the trees as the current flows most strongly through the trees. 'Paddle', I hear an inner voice telling me. Oh yes, I have to go faster or slower than the current, and, oh yes, I have to look where I am going, oh yes, I can find a small channel to the side of the trees which will lead me out of danger.

There is no respite in this gorge. Huge waves and obstacles present themselves and I am completely committed, there is no going back. The relentless onward motion of the biggest gorge and the biggest, most consistent, rapids I have ever encountered batter my body, my kayak and my inner faculties. I am consumed by a bigger than usual wave that I approach awkwardly. My boat flips over. I am underwater now. 'Hang onto your boat and paddle.' I flail

around under the water. To my surprise I can still reach my kayak. I grab the now semi-submerged, heavy craft and wash downstream feet-first.

My kayak and I pass my paddle as we travel down the roaring, deafening, washing machine-like waters of the gorge. I have no real sense of time when travelling through the timeless world of the gorge, until, as suddenly as it all began, it goes quiet.

I am washed up near a large flat rock in the middle of the river where the waters are slowly swirling, invitingly. I scramble to get a foothold and slither and slip until I can get myself out of the river like a primordial creature discovering land for the first time. I drag my kayak up beside me and take stock. There is no one else around for now. I have emerged unscathed. I reach for the flask of lukewarm instant coffee, wrap my hands around the cup and drink, gratefully and deeply.

Parker Palmer talks of the perils of a divided life when we become separate from our own souls. I have been trained to live the divided life through the paradigm of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century that I have been exposed to during my childhood and young adult life. Palmer tells us,

I yearn to be whole, but dividedness often seems the easier choice...I pay a steep price when I live a divided life, feeling fraudulent, anxious about being found out, and depressed by the fact that I am denying my own self-hood. The people around me pay a price as well, for now they walk on ground made unstable by my dividedness. How can I affirm another's identity when I deny my own? (2004, p.4)

My thesis is an adventure in self-discovery. In my kayaking adventure I recognised an opportunity for learning. More than learning to kayak, it was one about risk taking, trusting and having faith in myself. In retrospect I realise that this was an episode in my life that was to lead me wholeheartedly into another journey that was to become a phenomenological and hermeneutic study of my pedagogic lifeworld. Palmer encourages us to cultivate our new eyes and a new way of seeing things in our hidden wholeness,

In the wilderness, I sense the wholeness hidden “in all things”. It is the taste of wild berries, the scent of sun-baked pine, the sight of the Northern lights, the sound of water lapping the shore, signs of a bedrock integrity that is eternal and beyond all doubt. And when I return to a human world that is transient and riddled with disbelief, I have new eyes for the wholeness hidden in me and my kind and a new heart for loving even our imperfections. (p.5)

Palmer finds wholeness hidden in all things in the wild and beautiful places of his lived experience. I too seek to explicate my personal “bedrock of integrity that is eternal and beyond all doubt” through my writing and adventuring with the same abandon I showed when I plunged into the gorge as young kayaker. I hope, as I did then, to emerge as a different more reflective person. I hope, once more, to answer the call to adventure, to emerge as a renewed version of myself who has become conscious of my senses in tactile ways, senses of touch, smell, sight, hearing, and feeling that were to transform me during my research. Later in my research inquiry I am called to reflect on the nature of relatedness, touch, and tact that occurs in the pedagogic relationships that develop between me and my kayak instructors and fellow club members in Chapter 4, where I discuss the notion of being pedagogic in ordinary life.

Joseph Campbell described in *The hero with a thousand faces* (1972) his concept of the Hero's journey that occurs in a cycle consisting of three phases: departure, where the Hero leaves their comfortable and familiar world and ventures into the darkness of the unknown; initiation, where the Hero is subjected to a series of tests in which they must prove their character; and return, in which the Hero brings the boon of their quest back for the benefit of their people.

The Hero's journey is about growth and passage. The journey requires a separation from the comfortable, known world, and an initiation into a new level of awareness, skill, and responsibility, and then a return home. Each stage of the journey must be passed successfully if the initiate is to become a hero. To turn back at any stage is to reject the need to grow and mature. Colin Mortlock taught me adventure education in my first teacher education

program. Chris Bonington observed in the Foreword of Mortlock's book *The Adventure Alternative*,

Adventure journeys, providing you take any of them to the outer limits of your capabilities in a self-reliant manner, can take you along the road to truth and beauty, freedom and happiness. Your success is determined by your efforts and not by your results, and you may come to realise that the most important journey is the journey inwards. (1984, p.5)

Shaun Gallagher (1992) describes our self-transcendent encounter with education where the self is startled out of itself through encounters with the unknown and describes self-transcendence as an opening out toward one's own possibilities, a venturing into the unknown, neither within, or without our own power. Rather, using Richard Rorty's phrase, Gallagher suggests we are lured by "the power of strangeness" and we project our understanding in order to tame the unknown.

It is not so much the self which, by its own power, displaces itself, but the subject matter, the unfamiliar, which initiates the challenge to the fore-structure of understanding, and thus to familiar context and tradition. If self-transcendence starts from the self, it is not a "self-start". It is more the case that the self is startled out of itself in its encounter with the unknown.

(1992, p.182)

Does our self-transcendence bear close resemblance to our call to adventure? We are reluctant adventurers when we don't want to be chosen, when we choose not to answer the call. We are comfortable and secure in our current situations and don't foresee any reason to venture forth, we are caught in a vortex. We doubt our own capacity and we have limited vision as to what we may be expected to do or how we are able to navigate the challenges before us. Neo in *The Matrix* did not want to be 'The One'. He was chosen by forces beyond his own knowing and was led from one challenge to another, given just the right information or equipment to get him to the next stage, and yet, he too had a choice as to whether he was ready to adventure. This might be the lure of so many computer games where players pit their wits against a series of challenges, finding their way through locked doors, acquiring magic powers and vital equipment by overcoming challenges on the way.

Might I find it possible to leave the predictable, known, and prescribed shores of positivist thought? To do this I begin by following Jardine to understand better the roots of a Cartesian positivist worldview.

Jardine reminds us that Descartes discovered through reductive thought that “The foundation of the world is not in the world” (2012h, p.14). The foundation of the world cannot be found in the world he says, according to Descartes, because everything in the world can be possibly doubted — so everything inevitably gets cut off from the lifeworld of the world through our Cartesian thinking. As Jardine puts it,

Everybody’s heard this thing so often, *cogito ergo sum*, “I think, therefore, I am,” that it’s become almost laughable to hear, but in fact it was a really interestingly, weirdly, accomplished outcome of trying to find an unshakeable, indubitable foundation. After doubting every single thing in the world, his own doubting of the world showed itself to be indubitable...So what we ended up inheriting from Descartes was this really interesting new thing that hadn’t quite been imagined this way before: an experience of “myself” as a “subject,” an “I” that is present to itself with great clarity and distinctness, that is “worldless” and that assuredly is even if everything else is erased. (2012h, p.15)

We are cast out of our world, suggests Jardine, through our Cartesian inheritance. We have become separate, distinct, unrelated, and distrustful. He says, “Anything that’s doubtable is eradicated, anything that’s ambiguous is eradicated...only things which can stand up against methodological doubt are real, singular, separate, clean, clear, distinct, without contaminating relations” (2012h, p.17).

Is it that our roots of reductive positivism spring from Cartesian methodological doubt? The purpose of my work is to be scholarly and to demystify the notion of academic writing and academic work I once held. My hope is that I develop a profound understanding of my human capacity to make meaning from the things of the world as they present themselves to me as a recipient of how things manifest — a dative of manifestation. I have a growing willingness to practice, intend and develop my own human awareness and consciousness. I learn through my exploration, and by studying the scholarly work of others, to apply an attitude of

phenomenological analysis and interpretation to allow meaning to be revealed to me.

### On the edge

I am on an edge. I have done the course work, engaged in discussions, and read mountains of books. I have read and re-read books and articles. I have been hovering on the edge for some time. I am ready to take the plunge into the next phase. I am ready to practise, to transcend my personal doubt, and follow the lead of my teachers to take the hermeneutic turn for myself. I am ready.

Hermeneutic phenomenology at level 1 is like *seeing* the wild horse. Here one examines the phenomenon and can accurately describe it, bringing the reader into connection with its wildness. In level 2, one is able to *hear* the wild horse as well, to let it speak for itself to the reader. Sound waves penetrate more deeply onto one's body than do rays of light. In level 3, one *rides* the wild horse, taking the risk of ending up in a place one did not expect. One lets the horse become the *guide*. It is for us as phenomenologists to observe the wild horses, record their movements, hear them, and even, for a few of us, try to ride them. Few are willing to see wild horses as their teachers. Transformative phenomenologists dare to climb into the saddle. (Rehorick & Bentz, 2009, p. 21)

I long to encounter the “wild horse” of phenomenology and let it be my teacher. Like all adventures the only way to really experience the wild horse is to approach it, to get to know it, and to have the courage to try to ride the wild horse as Rehorick and Bentz encourage us to do (ibid).

Sometimes I have a glimpse of the landscape before me as the clouds of my self-doubt part to reveal the path ahead, and the trees, hills and uncharted territory that lie before me. I get to see the landscape, which is so much less daunting than the one I invent in my own imagination. I am less fearful when I take the plunge and write my story.

I empathise with Rehorick as he reflects on his early experience of phenomenology and hermeneutics when he tells us it was like “being

plunged into a world which intuitively ‘made sense’ long before I could express what I thought it meant” (Rehorick & Taylor, 1995, p. 391).

“Plunged into” aptly characterises my first encounter with concepts I could neither spell nor understand- phenomenology, ontology, hermeneutics!..Jung’s eclectic, interdisciplinary knowledge left me spell-bound as he expanded my intellectual horizons by quantum leaps. This accidental (perhaps karmic) detour thrust me into a world where understanding took precedence over explanation, and the search for meaning replaced more authoritative assertions about cause-effect-prediction. The more I listened, the more this stuff felt right. (Rehorick & Taylor, 1995, p. 391, cited in Rehorick & Bentz, 2009, p. 9-10)

What do phenomenology, hermeneutics, and ontology mean? What is it to be interpretive? How do I know *about* phenomenology? How do I know how to *do* phenomenology? Apparently, I am not the only beginning scholar to want a ‘*how to*’ guide to phenomenology and hermeneutics (van Manen, 2014; Rehorick & Bentz, 2009; Jardine, Clifford, & Friesen, 2008).

Rehorick explains his relationship with phenomenology has become an integral part of a multi-disciplinary approach to research that has allowed him to breathe life into his writing and the work with his students. I am encouraged to follow his and others’ lead in understanding the mysterious field of interpretive phenomenological hermeneutic inquiry. I am both drawn to and baffled by this philosophy when, like my fellow impatient scholars, I want to pin it down so that I can *do* it. Citing his *curriculum vitae* from 2004, Rehorick expresses something of his first encounters with phenomenology in his research and writing.

My multi-disciplinary research and pedagogical activities are guided by a continuing commitment to interpretive and qualitative approaches to the study of human experience. One expression is through my philosophical, theoretical and applied research, writing and editorial activity in the domain of “applied social phenomenology”. The study of human consciousness through phenomenology provides one powerful lens to explore the deep and subtle features of human development through expressions of individual and collective experience. (Rehorick & Bentz, 2009, p. 10)

van Manen supports human science researchers to describe and make meaning from their lifeworld as practitioners. van Manen (2014) describes “phenomenology of practice” (Loc 506) as “the practice of phenomenological research and writing,” a practice that “reflects *on* and *in* practice and prepares *for* practice.” Rather than the *doing of* in a reductive manner, he describes the practice of phenomenology as an ongoing process and attitude, which “serves to foster and strengthen an embodied ontology, epistemology, and axiology of thoughtful and tactful action” (Loc 506).

We are perhaps confused when we describe phenomenology as a method. My habitual thinking scrambles again to the ‘how to’ instruction manual idea of phenomenology. I am grateful to interpretive hermeneutic phenomenological practitioners and writers who have gone before me for helping to demystify, explain, model, and inspire me to begin *being* phenomenological in pursuit of hermeneutic understanding and interpretive inquiry as “meaning-giving methods for doing inquiry” (van Manen, 2014, Loc 506).

Thomas Groenewald’s paper, *A Phenomenological Research Design Illustrated*, points us to Amedeo Georgi’s opinion that an operative phrase in phenomenological research is “to describe”. “The aim of the researcher is to describe as accurately as possible the phenomenon, refraining from any pre-given framework, but remaining true to the facts” (2004, p.5).

van Manen invites us to experiment describing with an attitude of openness and delve into the “phenomenologies of lived meaning, the meaning of meaning, and the originary sources of meaning”(2014, p.15). We can always be sure in reading van Manen that he will enliven his meaning with real lived experience description, for example, this meditation related to wakefulness might recall Maxine Greene’s inducement to teachers to be wide awake (Greene, 1978).

The large metropolis of the human sciences exposes its inhabitants to opportunities of exotic travels. We traverse and dwell in intellectual landscapes that do not always seem to bear immediately on the urgencies and practicalities of our own lives. But the debts I have incurred in such travels (both in real and virtual travels) are immense. My personal library houses a true travelogue of theories I have explored and theorists I have “visited”. And



yet, in spite of these fascinations with theoretical experiences, I sometimes admit an ambivalent relation with “theory”- not any specific theory, but theory as such-theory as an intellectual achievement and property, theory as membership into the “circle of initiates”. Theory can be a staple that feeds our intellectual and moral hunger, and it can be the addictive substance that induces a cognitive amnesia. Wakefulness requires that we constantly try to work in the tension between the theoretic and what lies outside of that. (van Manen, 2014, Loc 484)

van Manen urges us to bring things to life through practising phenomenology and hermeneutic inquiry within our lifeworlds. There is no quick fix step-by-step guide to phenomenology. We are encouraged to dive in and to delve deeply into the meaning of things, to bracket, or set apart, words, phrases and themes that emerge from our writing and our texts, to examine our presumptions, and to seek for and find new understandings within the themes as we write, re-write, and allow the things themselves to reveal themselves to us. We learn by doing. We learn by first being willing to set sail into the uncharted waters of our writing and re-telling of the accounts of our lived experience, and we learn by reading the interpretive work of others. We can nurture our phenomenological interpretive hermeneutic attitude to deepen our understanding and to enjoy the “essential primacy of practice that lies at the protofoundation (original understanding) of thought, of consciousness, of the being of human being” as Jan Patocka, an early student of Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger, tells us. Patocka points out that “when we understand phenomenologically, we understand practically, and that phenomenology needs to “bring out” the originary personal experience. The experience of the way we live situationally, the way we are personal beings in space” (Patocka, 1998, p.97, cited in van Manen, 2014, Loc 497).

My thesis follows such guidance. I bring the things of my experience to life. I dive in and delve deeply. I embark on an adventure in phenomenology to identify themes that are revealed to me as I examine and select from my autobiographical accounts, and I look for new understandings as I write, re-write, and allow the things themselves to deepen my understanding of my personal experience. As van Manen

encourages, I am not just a researcher, I become a writer, not a reporter. I become “an author who writes from the midst of life experiences where meanings resonate and reverberate with reflective being.” I wish my text to become a sensitive phenomenological text that “reflects on life while reflecting life” (van Manen, 2014, Loc 9517).

I am excited that personal transformation of consciousness, heightened perceptiveness and increased thoughtfulness and tact might be a prospect for me.

Moustakas (1994) in *Phenomenological Research Methods* calls us to focus on the wholeness of experience in our research practice where we can search for essences of experience. In this way we become guided towards *immersion*, becoming involved; *incubation*, allowing space for awareness, intuitive insights and understanding; *illumination*, allowing expanded understanding of the experience; *explication*, becoming reflective; and finally, *creative synthesis*, revealing patterns and relationships.

And van Manen (1990) calls us into deep learning,

Phenomenological projects and their methods often have a transformative effect on the researcher himself or herself. Indeed, phenomenological research is often itself a form of deep learning, leading to a transformation of consciousness, heightened perceptiveness, increased thoughtfulness and tact, and so on. (p. 163)

My thesis is an exploration into how I change through my own work. I explain myself to myself, and how my writing forms and informs my thesis—the act of writing brings forth my world. My phenomenological writing is both descriptive and interpretive. I am “to be attentive to how things appear, ...to let things speak for themselves.” I am to assume that “there are no such things as uninterpreted phenomena” and that “the ‘facts’ of lived experience are always already meaningfully (hermeneutically) experienced.” I am to work upon capturing my texts of lived experience in language, itself an “inevitably an interpretive process” (van Manen, 1990, p.180).

If I am to explain myself to myself, I am to explain who I am in pedagogic relation to myself and others. I wonder who is the 'I' that I am and how does my 'I' affect who I am in pedagogic relationship.

Sokolowski (2008) talks of I, the human person, as an agent of consciousness, or a dative of manifestation. We come to know when we encounter our world directly and it is through this encounter that we make meaning, adjust our meaning and engage in meaning as a dynamic act of knowing. Is it this that makes us human? Are we constantly in the process of meaning making?

I, a dative of manifestation, am the one who speaks and writes my lifeworld. I find a moral imperative to share my journey of coming into being by writing and re-writing my stories. What it is to know and participate in the pedagogical good becomes crucial to my hermeneutic questioning. This is my opportunity for originally contributing to human flourishing that this thesis makes — to evidence pedagogical, relational responsibility for self, other and the world.

My research helps me to grapple with the questions I generate for myself, I grapple with them for us all, for all of us who are curious about how our knowing affects those who know us as teachers, parents and students. How can we know as we are known, how can we be known as we know? How can we avoid the divided life that Palmer cautions us against as “a failure of human wholeness?” “Integrity”, says Palmer, means “more than an adherence to a moral code.” It is “the state or quality of being entire, complete, and unbroken” (Palmer, 2004, p.8).

When we appreciate and understand integrity, we can begin a journey towards becoming whole. I come to explore what might be pedagogically good, what is good pedagogy, and, how can I practice good pedagogy? How might I support my fellow teachers and community so that we can together discover, describe, and practice good pedagogy? I ask questions throughout this thesis. I question myself, and continue to question as a hermeneutic practice in ways that van Manen explains.

From a phenomenological point of view, to do research is always to question the way we experience the world, to want to *know* the world in which we live

as human beings. And since to know the world is profoundly to *be* in the world in a certain way, the act of researching-questioning-theorising is the intentional act of attaching ourselves to the world, to become more fully part of it, or better, to *become* the world. (1990, p.5)

Rainer Maria Rilke teaches his young student about questions,

...have patience with everything unresolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves as if they were locked rooms of books written in a very foreign language. Don't search for the answers, which could not be given to you now, because you would not be able to live them. And the point is, to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps then, someday far in the future, you will gradually, without even noticing it, live your way into the answer. (1903. *Fourth Letter*)

My research is an act of caring. I want to know that which is most essential to being human. For me, to care is to serve, and to share our being with that which we love. The caring of my questioning is to live my questioning way.

### **Pedagogic moments: Desirable objects for our understanding**

As mentioned in my introduction, my thesis is oriented towards explicating pedagogic moments that arise in my lifeworld through attending to themes made known to me through my writing. I write to find meaning and to understand myself as a pedagogic being.

A phenomenological understanding of a moment is grounded and related through our historicity, memories, dreams and reflections (Jardine, 2014; Sokolowski, 2000; Capra, 2002; Laszlo, 2004; Bentz & Shapiro, 1998). A moment is not just a moment, as we understand in our mechanistic worldview. Phrases such as 'I will be with you in a moment', 'the moment has passed', and 'we experience things moment by moment', as demonstrated through our vernacular language, suggest that moments are slices of time — here one moment, gone the next. Do our time slices pile up on top of each other to give us a sense of chronological time as each moment sits apart from all others? Does a moment have significance amongst all other transient moments?

Sokolowski, (2000) points out that being aware of the three structural forms that appear in phenomenology, makes it easier for us to “understand what is going on in a particular passage or the development of a particular theme” (p.22). Sokolowski identifies and distinguishes the three interrelated but separate structures in phenomenology as the structure of parts and wholes, the structure of identity in a manifold and, more particularly to phenomenological analysis, the structure of presence and absence.

Wholes can be investigated and analysed through two different kinds of parts — pieces and moments, says Sokolowski. Pieces are parts that can subsist independently and apart from the whole. Such pieces can be whole themselves and also be perceived as comprising of pieces that can, in themselves, be presented apart from their whole. The fruit, limbs, leaves and other components of a tree are pieces of the whole tree, of which they are a part. An apple, the fruit of an apple tree, has components such as skin and pips, stalk, flesh, and juice that can all exist as pieces that are independent of the whole apple. Apple juice can be further sub-divided into its components such as water, glucose, and so on, which can exist as pieces of the whole juice. My body has components that can exist as independent pieces. I have hair, skin, nails, heart, lungs, liver, and limbs. My body can be subdivided into its components, like the apples and apple tree. Many of the components can exist as independent pieces of my whole body. My hair and nails for instance can exist as separate pieces.

Moments are parts that cannot be detached, subsist separately from or exist independently of the whole and are therefore non-independent parts. Colour, sound, movement, and perception are examples of moments that are non-independent parts that cannot occur, except as blended with other moments. Colour cannot occur independently of space or surface, it cannot be presented by itself. Vision cannot be isolated from the eye.

The same item can be regarded as a piece in one respect and a moment in another. An apple for instance can be separated from its tree but it cannot be seen independently of the viewer. It is as an independent piece of an apple tree and also, as an object to be viewed. It is a dimension of blended moments that are non-independent of one another and can only together become a whole.

My body may exist as pieces that could exist independently. There is so much more to my body than the pieces and more to myself than my body. As a living person I observe and experience my body as I am observed and experienced by others in my lifeworld. The parts of my body are viewed in the context of my lifeworld as non-independent moments of my *whole* body that is viewed as non-independent moments of my *whole* being that belongs as a non-independent moment to my lifeworld across, in, and through time.

The pedagogic moments I explore in my thesis are diachronic rather than chronological. That is, they weave and interrelate with each other, and together, they paint a picture of what it might be to become wholly pedagogic. They cannot subsist independently of the whole. They are non-independent blended moments that cannot occur, except as blended with other moments. My thesis is not a timeline of my life. It identifies significant phenomenological moments that I draw from my autobiographical writings and conversations with others that help me to make meaning. Stories unfold to describe my journey towards becoming wholly in this world and perhaps more wholly pedagogic. Things reveal themselves through hermeneutic phenomenological reflection. Things become meaningful as themes speak up and out.

### **What is the nature of pedagogy?**

van Manen's (1990) use of the term 'pedagogy' refers to our lived experiences as parents and educators in our relationships with children. My understanding of pedagogy for this research embraces van Manen's interpretation as well as that of Paolo Freire (1970) who assumes that our pedagogic encounters extend to all others with whom we have pedagogic relations to include children *and* adults. I am in pedagogic relationship with those who teach me as well as those I teach. Am I in pedagogic relatedness with my world as I get to know my world, become part of my world, and become my world? Socrates and his student Meno shared a pedagogic encounter as two adults in Plato's *Meno* when Socrates questions Meno on the nature of virtue. I have pedagogic relational encounters with children, adults *and* my entire world.

The re-telling and interpreting of my encounters require me to write stories of my lived world that relate the stories of others. My relating and re-telling requires me to be ethically impeccable in terms of honouring others and myself. My ethical purpose and intent is to develop my thoughtfulness and tact (van Manen, 1990, p.4). I portray others with the *ethos* in mind to be true to them, and trustworthy in my regard for them. The people in my inquiry are not objects — they are subjects within my re-telling encounter. We learn we must act responsibly to truly, and truthfully relate. I respect the privacy and anonymity of the participants of my re-telling — for this reason I change the names of the people I encounter in this thesis.

van Manen laments with us that the term pedagogy has come to be “roughly equated with the act of teaching, instructional methodology, curriculum approach, or education in general” and, “there has been little attempt to pose the question of the nature of pedagogy, to dialogue about the meaning of pedagogy in our everyday lives” (1990, p.142). I join with van Manen and add reason to my exploration of the nature and meaning of pedagogical relating in my everyday life. And with him, I too ask, “Can pedagogy be observed and experienced?” We learn to approach pedagogy as though it is something we are and can be rather than something that we do or can be definable and replicable in a positivist way. We learn “we must act responsibly and responsively in all our relations with those to whom we stand in a pedagogic relationship” (van Manen, 1990, p.12).

Rather than observing and reducing pedagogy to a series of behaviours that can be copied and replicated, van Manen asks of us the most important pedagogic question, “What makes our actions pedagogic in the first place” (p.146)? Is the notion that pedagogy is ineffable, “that no scientific observation or conceptual formulation will lead to an unambiguous definition of pedagogy,” beyond the scope and effort of behavioural teachers’ competency training? We learn to understand that ineffable pedagogy, with its seeming characteristic of unteachability, “does not make pedagogy any less a desirable object for our understanding” (1990, p.143).

How do we begin to stand in pedagogic relationship, and how do we understand what is required of us to be truly pedagogic? I wonder what

makes our actions pedagogic. We learn what contributes to a more hermeneutic type of competence through pedagogic thoughtfulness and tact. We consider and become sensitive to what authorises us as pedagogic teachers (1990, p.143).

### **My inquiry as hermeneutic phenomenological research**

Themes that speak up and out in my thesis as questions assist me to explore relatedness, touch and tact in my pedagogic lifeworld. Can we be pedagogic without such qualities? Are relatedness, touch and tact forms of knowledge? Are these qualities teachable and acquired through practice, as Meno asked of Socrates in relation to virtue? Are notions of relatedness, touch and tact ineffable qualities that we can pay attention to as we grapple with the ineffability of pedagogy? Does the very ambiguity of pedagogy as being unteachable and undefinable in a direct and straightforward manner call for me to find a way to understand pedagogy as a way of being?

My thesis is an adventure in hermeneutic phenomenological interpretive inquiry. It tells how I become intentional and oriented towards my research. I take lead from Jardine, van Manen, Denis Sumara (1996), Palmer, Sokolowski, Bentz, Rehorick, and Shapiro, and many others who have delved into this fascinating field, as well as many whose lives have changed as a result.



## CHAPTER 2

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# CONSCIOUSNESS, PARTICIPATING IN MIND

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There is no method to human truths, says Gadamer. Can phenomenology and hermeneutics help us to distinguish between what is and what is not truthful? Are we blinded by our consensus reality? Can we lift the veil we weave with our assumptions to discover that we humans participate in Mind through becoming aware of, and embedding ourselves in, our lifeworld?

### **What is the nature of truth and reality?**

I wonder about our assumptions that embed our understanding of the nature of truth and reality. Does my understanding of truth, revealed to me through my lifeworld and hermeneutic journey, contradict our traditional Cartesian western worldview — as with the small boy in the story of the Emperor’s New Clothes who spoke up and told us that the Emperor, strutting before his applauding people in his grand new costume, was in fact naked. I wonder. Has our western Cartesian thinking, like the Emperor, cheated us out of seeing things as they really are? I align myself with a growing community of researchers in physics, psychology, philosophy, education and cosmology who explore an increasingly plausible worldview that challenges our traditional understandings. Gadamer understands that “We are no longer able to approach Cartesian thinking with our contemporary understanding of tradition like an object of knowledge, grasping, measuring and controlling” (1994, p.192). He invites us to stand differently in relation to our world and to consider,

Rather than meeting us in our world, it is much more a world into which we ourselves are drawn. (It) possesses it’s own worldliness and, thus, the centre of

its own Being so long as it is not placed into the object world of producing and marketing. (Gadamer, 1994, p. 192)

What is the “it” that Gadamer refers to? What possesses its own worldliness? Is “it” our relationship with our world, or the world itself that includes us in relationship with it? Gadamer goes on to tell us,

The Being of this thing cannot be accessed by objectively measuring and estimating; rather the totality of a lived context has entered into and is present in the thing. And we belong to it as well. Our orientation to it is always something like our orientation to an inheritance that this thing belongs to, be it from a stranger’s life or from our own. (1994, p. 192)

Jardine tells us that reductive Cartesian doubt leads to a confident amnesia. We habitually doubt in our modern, natural-scientific thinking and methodology. We are encouraged by Jardine to break free from the comfort of our confident amnesia and orient ourselves towards questions of how things have turned out for us to actually understand what we’re doing. He urges us to “Try to wake up and understand the fixes we are in, where they came from and what might now be possible, (and) what freedom or refuge we might want or need” (Jardine, 2012h, p.9). We might ask then, what different freedom or refuge might we need? What Jardine is asking us to do is to re-evaluate the challenges of our traditions in our contemporary times.

How do we wake up? How do we realise that we suffer from confident amnesia? Can hermeneutics and phenomenology assist us through the practice of bracketing our assumptions and turning to the “Being of this thing,” the world itself, and, as Gadamer describes, the “totality of a lived context” (1994, p.192)?

Assumptions become virtually undetectable in our awareness and masquerade as truth itself, particularly those that are shared throughout history, are deeply embedded in culture and inform the fabric of societal institutions. They become so familiar to us that they permeate every aspect of our lives like the air that surrounds us. The teaching of science in western schools, for instance, continues for the most part to spring from and be informed by a mechanistic worldview characterised by the separation of matter from mind, observer from the observed and reality from the imaginary (Bohm, 1981; Bohm, & Hiley, 1993) Rupert Sheldrake was

influenced by Thomas Kuhn as an early scientist and reminds us that “entirely new vistas open up when a widely accepted assumption is taken as the beginning of an inquiry, rather than as an unquestionable truth” (Sheldrake, 2012, p.8). Sheldrake takes the phenomenological hermeneutic stance of challenging assumptions by “turning doctrines into questions” (p.8).

Richard Tarnas, a cosmologist and philosopher, defines our modern worldview as one that “experiences a radical separation between subject and object, a distinct division between the human self and the encompassing world” (Tarnas, 2006, p.16). He suggests that our worldview goes beyond us passively viewing our world, suggesting that our perception of our world constitutes our world, thus affecting all that our world becomes.

Our worldview is not simply the way we look at the world. It reaches inward to constitute our innermost being, and outward to constitute the world. It mirrors but also reinforces and even forges the structures, armourings, and possibilities of our interior life. It deeply configures our psychic and somatic experience: the patterns of our sensing, knowing and interacting with the world. Worldviews create worlds. (Tarnas, 2006, p.16)

Does a new way of viewing and creating our world offer us freedom and refuge as we refrain from objectively measuring our world, and as we seek to understand “its own worldiness and the centre of its own Being” (Gadamer, 1994, p. 192), to which we are inextricably related?

Ervin Laszlo, a philosopher, quantum physicist and proponent of Systems Theory, maintains that contrary to our modern worldview, the Universe is a quasi-living, coherent whole. He says, “Matter - the kind of ‘stuff’ that makes up particles joined in atoms joined in molecules joined in cells joined in organisms - is not a separate kind of thing, and it doesn’t even have a reality of its own” (Laszlo, 2006, p.1).

Stanislav Grof (1985; 1988) challenges our assumptions that the development of science has been a gradually unfolding linear development, where an accumulation of knowledge about the Universe is based on a particular set of fixed rules in relation to the nature of reality. He reminds us about Kuhn’s study of the development of scientific theory that began with

his observations of the fundamental differences and disagreements between scientists in relation to the basic nature of what appeared to be legitimate problems and approaches.

Kuhn points out that the history of science is anything but a systematic accumulation of data and increasingly accurate theories that build on one another, but rather it shows a cyclical, dynamic process of paradigm development and dissolution. He maintains that “Historians of science have been finding it more and more difficult to fulfil the functions that the concept of development-by-accumulation assigns to them” (Kuhn, 1970, p.2). Grof reminds us of the importance of paradigms in scientific research on the basis that reality is intensely complex and multifaceted and is impossibly beyond the reach of scientists to arrive at unambiguous solutions. Kuhn, cited by Grof (1985), says Paradigm Theory offers a more dynamic model for the unfolding of thought and theory. In Kuhn’s work, we begin with a pre-paradigmatic phase of competing ideas and concepts before a paradigm is accepted and becomes mandatory practice. The practice is then often mistaken for truth itself, or an accurate description of reality rather than being seen as a useful map or model for interpreting currently available information. There is, as Grof reminds us, a powerful tendency for science theorists to confuse the map with the territory.

There is then a ‘period of normal science’ that is predicated on the assumption that scientists know what the universe is like and that the leading theory defines not only what the world is, but also what it is not: it determines what is possible as well as what is in principle impossible. (Grof, 1985, p.5)

Kuhn describes research as a “strenuous and devoted effort to force nature into the conceptual boxes supplied by professional education” and that “as long as the paradigm is taken for granted, only those problems will be considered legitimate that can be assumed to have solutions; this guarantees rapid success of normal science” (Kuhn, 1970, p.5). Grof says,

Paradigms have a powerful normative influence that pervades the majority of our societal thinking, become statements about reality and nature, and define the allowable problem field and sets standards for acceptable methods and solutions. (1985, p.5)

Paradigm shifts that have historically occurred such as the shift from Newtonian to Einsteinian physics and the Copernican Revolution leads to drastic transformation in scientific imagination, the impact of which shift the perception of the world. Have I come to a point where I might envisage a possibility for a paradigm shift in education? Kuhn discusses our willingness to defend assumptions regarding ‘normality’ in science.

Normal science, the activity in which most scientists inevitably spend almost all of their time, is predicated on the assumption that the scientific community knows what the world is like. Much of the success of the enterprise derives from the community’s willingness to defend that assumption, if necessary, at considerable cost. (Kuhn, 1970, p.5)

Is our understanding of ‘normal education’ dependent on the community’s willingness to defend similar assumptions? If we examine our assumptions about education we may free ourselves of the hold our beliefs have on what we consider to be normal. Does the Emperor, indeed, have no clothes?

Kuhn recognises that paradigm shifts in our thinking, however small the events, can be revolutionary. Revolutions need not be as memorable as “Major turning points in scientific development associated with the names of Copernicus, Newton, Lavoisier and Einstein” (1970, p.5) Revolutions in our thinking can happen in our everyday lifeworld in education. They can, like scientific revolutions, transform the educational imagination in ways that we can describe as a transformation of the world within which our work is done — worldviews create worlds.

Do I have an experience of ‘universal coherence’ that manifests itself through my lifeworld? What implications are there for living my worldview to recognise coherence? How can our worldview affect our education practices, beliefs and assumptions? Can we release ourselves from our Cartesian amnesia? Can I influence others through my teaching and life practice to embark with them on journeys that encourage an opening to expanded and connected notions of reality? How does viewing a coherent universe affect our knowing, pedagogy and the way we are with one other? How are we to understand pedagogical relating as a way of being in the world? Can we, through pedagogic relatedness, possess our worldliness and

become the centre of our own Being? How do we rescue our pedagogic world from being placed into the object world of producing and marketing?

### **Does our knowing extend beyond our sensory perception?**

The classical view of human consciousness presumes that the perception of our experiences is confined to the brain and nervous system and that we process information entirely through our senses. Laszlo (2006) suggests that the human mind or consciousness is remarkably coherent with the rest of the world and that there is a growing body of evidence to suggest that a vast source of information can be shared amongst humans that could not have been acquired through the usual sensory path. He suggests that if we do not repress information that reaches our consciousness, “We become aware of subtle intuitions, images, and sensations that tell us that our brain and consciousness receive spontaneous impressions from our physical and biological, and even from our social and cultural milieu” (Laszlo, 2006, p.54).

Laszlo describes how Simon Berkovitch and Hermes Romijn, a computer scientist and a neurobiologist, have independently grappled with the problem that the brain simply does not have enough storage capacity to store the information that is gathered over the lifetime of a human. They suggest a more satisfactory explanation of brain function that, rather than having long-term memory stored within the brain, it is extra-somatic and that our lifetime’s experience is “stored in a holographic field that embeds the brain and the body” (Laszlo, 2006, p.57). The notion of a holographic field or intelligent storage system of information that exists around and beyond individual organisms allows for humans to draw on a vast field of personal long-term memory that is beyond the brain’s storage capacity. It provides an explanation for a vast body of evidence of extra-sensory perception that has been reported and verified where people have ‘known’ information that could have not possibly been acquired through the senses (Grof, 1985, 1988; Laszlo, 2006; Sheldrake, 2012).

I draw on my own experience of extra-sensory perception, in recent times and during my childhood. These experiences support me to challenge

our traditional scientific worldview that separates consciousness from matter. I explore an emerging worldview that entertains an integral vision of reality. This notion of reality allows for a more plausible explanation of my own and other's experiences that in the traditional sense defy explanation.

A turning point in my own understanding came when I had an extra-sensory experience involving my brother. I had moved to Australia from England and maintained an infrequent connection with my immediate family. I had moved a number of times from home to home and job to job. My parents and siblings had a hard time keeping up with where I was living, resulting in a tenuous connection with them for several years.

I had a particularly close relationship with my brother and sister as we were growing up. My siblings and I shared very closely and provided company and support for one another in our early life even though I had practically lost touch with them in later years.

It was late one evening when I had an overwhelming experience that utterly jolted me. Without any warning, I sensed that I was being urged to return home and that my brother was deeply distressed. I had a very strong sense of his presence at that moment. I went to bed that night with the intention of contacting him in the morning to check on his wellbeing and to make an overdue contact with my long-suffering family.

The phone rang early next morning. It was a call from my father who had not made personal contact with me for several years. He broke the news to me that Alex, my brother, had just suicided. When we later established the time of his death it correlated precisely with the time of my experience in Australia when I felt that he was contacting me.

Sheldrake's research with siblings demonstrates that we can have strong and reliable extra-sensory perception between siblings and other close family members. He talks of our particular extra-sensory "knowing" about our siblings and those who are close to us that transcends time and space. Was it coincidence that I sensed my brother's distress and his close connection with me just as he died? Did my familial and close emotional connection with him allow us to share information in ways that defy our

traditional understanding of what is possible in the ways we communicate with one another?

Sheldrake challenges materialists to explain why telepathy and pre-cognition is theoretically impossible and to explain what is wrong with evidence of psychic phenomena. He says, “Most people claim to have had telepathic experiences. Numerous statistical experiments have shown that information can be transmitted from person to person in a way that cannot be explained in terms of the normal senses” (Sheldrake, 2012, p. 258).

Laszlo (2006) suggests that once we are released from the idea that all memory resides within the brain, and that information is instead recorded in a holographic field beyond the conscious being, people are able to access a personal memory bank of experience that constitutes our long-term memory of all our experiences. This, he says, can be compared to accessing a personal home page on the world-wide-web. He suggests that in some circumstances our perceptions can extend further to access the experiences and thought processes of the holograms of others. He calls these “alien holograms” (p.58) that we can occasionally access, particularly if we have been bonded in some way through family, friendship or sympathy. They may be siblings, parents, friends, lovers, or others to whom we are, or have been emotionally close.

As I return to these memories that depended on extra sensory perception it becomes clearer to me why in this part of my thesis I explore the possibilities for having ineffable capacities for experiencing closeness and empathy with others. If I am open to understanding the power of nearness, perhaps sometimes perceived intuitively, my emphasis on the necessity for touch, tact and relatedness in pedagogy becomes even more vital.

I had no usual satisfactory explanation for my synchronistic experience with my brother. What I did have was a vague sense of recognition that some of my experiences as a child were similar to this one and that I had not considered them to be out of the ordinary in my life. I rather believe that my capacity for real empathy with others had begun. An early personal experience concerned another of my siblings.



I was young, about eight years old, and was staying with my grandparents in their capacious and dignified waterfront house that had been their home for many years. It was early morning and I was lying in my bed looking up at a picture on the wall depicting a small girl sitting up in bed who was breakfasting on boiled egg and toast as a dog and cat looked on with interest. As I continued to look at this familiar scene I became aware of meeting with another person who appeared to be there in the room with me. She was a young girl, like me, and I felt that I was very close to her. I felt as though I knew her profoundly and with great familiarity. Was she in my imagination or was she real? Where had she come from? I had a strong sense that she had been here before and that she done exactly as I was doing, lying in bed examining the picture on the wall in this very room at some other time before me. I also had the strong sense that that was not all we shared. I had no words for the depth of connection that I had with this imaginary person who felt very real to me.

I was 13 years old before my mother took me to one side and told me about a secret aspect of her life that took place before I was born. My mother married soon after the end of World War II and gave birth to her first daughter. She left her marriage and her daughter and eventually divorced. Divorce and desertion in the 1940s was a shameful event, particularly for women. My father was a traditional conservative and pious person. As he considered marrying my divorced mother he demanded that all evidence of her previous marriage was to be hidden. My mother agreed to completely separate from her daughter. It was as if she had not existed. There were no references at all to my mother's first daughter or marriage as I was growing up. I was to all intents and purposes, the first child.

When I was introduced to Rachel, my older sister, I knew that I had already met my lost sibling and that we already knew one another from our extraordinary meeting. We have since shared stories of both being in the room in our grandparents' house where both of us were fascinated with that picture. Neither of us could remember details of any other pictures on the wall, only that one. The news that my sister was my mother's first born also satisfied a strong but unexplainable sense that I had not in fact been the first born myself and that 'someone else' had been before me, had occupied

the extremely intimate womb space of my mother's, and had paved the way for my own relatively easy birth.

One other of my childhood experiences is of talking and confiding with a woman who was very close to me and was like an imaginary mentor. I was fascinated with a glass sphere, which was one of my grandmother's numerous trinkets that adorned her dusty sideboard. I found that by concentrating and focussing on its depths I could disappear into a rich and imaginary world of images and dream scenes, just by staring into it. It transpired later that the sphere had been a crystal ball belonging to my great aunt who had a reputation for being psychic and had died many years before I was born. Much later, I was shown the one surviving photograph of her. She bore a striking resemblance to my imaginary mentor. Had I been able to see her, as I had seen my older sister, and as I had felt my brother's presence? Cartesian ways of knowing where mind became separate from body matter does not make much sense here. The ways of knowing that I have attributed to recounting these experiences go well beyond relying heavily on our senses. Again, touch, tact and relatedness permeated all the stories from childhood that became part of my historical consciousness.

David Bohm (cited in Grof, 1985), a theoretical physicist in the field of relativity theory and quantum mechanics, proposes a model of the Universe that is not dependent on direct observation. He makes efforts to address persistent paradoxes of modern physics and draws on a theory of hidden variables to suggest an alternative vision of reality and consciousness. Bohm proposes that reality can be likened to an unbroken and coherent whole that is involved in an unending process of change that he refers to as a "holomovement". Grof draws on Bohm's theory to suggest that the knowing acquired through mechanistic science, which we perceive through our senses, is a fragment of reality. He suggests that this information is embedded in a vastly greater field of reality existing around and beyond our ordinary powers of observation. These positions can be described as the unfolded or explicate order, the world of observable phenomena and enfolded or implicate order, the greater totality of existence, and the source of that which is known, and is, its generating matrix.

Grof speculates that we are on the verge of collectively embracing a major paradigm shift that herald a radical departure from the mechanistic model. Grof's understanding of such a paradigm could be,

Capable of accommodating and synthesizing all the diversity of data from quantum relativistic-physics, systems theory, consciousness research and neurophysiology as well as from the ancient and Oriental spiritual philosophies, shamanism, Aboriginal rituals and healing practices (and) would have to involve complementary dichotomies on three different levels: those of the cosmos, of the individual, and of the human brain. (Grof, 1985, p.91)

Bohm (1981), Grof (1985) and Laszlo (2004) suggest that the Universe reveals both phenomenal, explicate or unfolded aspects of itself — the everyday things we experience through our senses, alongside transcendental, implicate or enfolded aspects. Grof urges us to adopt a holonomic approach that “offers undreamed of possibilities in the field of consciousness research” (1985, p.91). I have come to see and understand that pedagogy and education can be part of the whole of that field.

Grof explains that if that were the case, a holonomic approach would offer a means for understanding contemporary consciousness and reality. He draws on worldwide inspiration, and attempts to inspire people across the world through introducing the practice of Holotropic breathwork.

### **The Universe as a coherent whole**

Laszlo (2006) is confident that insights are emerging in contemporary science that regards the Universe as a quasi-living coherent whole, which implies that all things are connected. He urges us to perhaps ask, is it that once we recognise an integral vision of reality, that supposes a continual arising of phenomena from a self-aware universe, we can free ourselves from being trapped in a universe that is predominantly governed by mechanistic and materialistic principles and our consciousness no longer needs to be a separate by-product of matter?

Could ideas that spring from consciousness be the basic elements of reality? Matter, rather than being the basic element we have collectively supposed it to be, could arise from and be included by consciousness and

ideas. Amit Goswami (1993) makes an attempt to provide a paradox-free interpretation of quantum physics that provides a seamless, logical, and coherent explanation of reality. He applies what we know in the quantum world — that of microscopic particles and energy bound in quantised wave packets that manifest non-locally, yet connected and are harmonious and creative — with the macro world of classical objects. It is the macro world, the everyday world in which we inhabit, that we have so long believed to be governed by Newtonian laws.

Does our macro world of things behave like non-local quantised wave packets? Does Goswami's paradox-free interpretation allow for my extra-sensory revelations from my family members to exist as being real non-local manifestations of reality? Can our interpretation of and participation in our world affect our world? Could our worldview create worlds?

A story told by Goswami tells of his observation that people in India catch monkeys using a jar of chickpeas. The monkeys, in their efforts to grasp the chickpeas, make a fist that prevents them from removing the chickpeas, or their fists, from the jar. It seems as though their unwillingness to let go of their prize leaves them trapped.

The axioms of material realism-materialism, determinism, locality and so forth-served us well in the past when our knowledge was more limited than it is today, but now they have become our trap. We may have to let go of the chickpeas of certainty in order to embrace the freedom that lies outside the material arena. (Goswami, 1993, p.47)

Hermeneutically, I raise questions to pursue possibilities that might enlighten my understandings. Can the way I perceive my world affect how I relate to the world, how I relate to others who are part of that world, and how I teach? Bohm emphasised that our thoughts tend to create fixed structures in our mind that makes dynamic processes appear to be static. Bohm reminds us that our language itself concentrates on nouns and naming, rather than verbs. The use of verbs encourages us to participate in a constantly changing dynamic flow of processes. Hermeneutically, we participate in 'worlding' and Being in order to let go of our propensity to

describe, measure, define, analyse, control and capture the world, in which we have no part, other than as impartial observers.

### **Consciousness as the ground of Being**

What do I understand to be my ground of Being? Goswami points out that “In idealist philosophy we speak of consciousness as the ground of all being” (1993, p.106). This understanding of consciousness correlates strongly with Laszlo’s claim that the Universe operates more like a coherent living organism than a machine and that it is plausible that all phenomena arise from and belong to a cosmic “holofield” that can be compared with the Akashic field of the Ancients. Buddhists refer to our ground of Being to describe the arising and passing of all phenomena that contribute to the experience of the present moment, that of itself arises, passes and contributes to the another moment, and so forth. My Buddhist teacher Tarchin Hearn introduced me to an exercise in contemplating my ground of Being. The exercise helps me to appreciate the interconnected web of encounters with sentient beings, places and events that have contributed to all of who I am in a single moment (1991, 1995). The exercise is one that encourages contemplation and wonderment. I was asked to consider who and what had had an impact on me and who I was at that moment as a result of those interactions. Our ground of Being could be described as everything that constitutes who we are. If we contemplate all that has contributed to any one moment, the web of connection is endless, as I discovered.

Sokolowski’s description of phenomenology (2000) and its relationship with time provide us with a model for the way we can understand how all that arises constitutes who we are. Phenomenology recognises that parts exist within wholes that occur in a dynamic matrix of all occurring phenomena. Phenomenology facilitates our capacity to take a step away from the natural attitude in order to understand this relationship.

I examined phenomenology’s principles of moments, parts, pieces and wholes in Chapter One. I explore my experience of encountering parts and wholes in this next section to contemplate the interconnectedness of

ordinary life events that arose for me during a seemingly isolated and solitary moment during a quiet afternoon.

Who and what is involved in my being able to enjoy a mid-afternoon cup of tea? I begin to play with listing and acknowledging the cast of thousands, some known to me, but many whom I have never met for me to realise and appreciate how complicated and interconnected this simple act turns out to be. Here goes: first I think of the tea itself, where has it come from? Who grew it, watered the soil, collected the rain or river water, and designed the irrigation and fertilisation system? Where was it grown, is this an Indian tea? Whose idea was it to drink tea anyway? Who learned to ferment the tea leaves, to perfume it with juniper? Who was Earl Grey come to that? Not to mention Lady Grey.

Some people eventually introduced tea to England, and then Australia, learned to market it, transport it, trade with other nations, package it, print the packaging, make the cellophane or cardboard, or both, take it to shops, put it on the shelves, introduce the idea in my mind about afternoon tea, design the teapot, make the teapot. I bought mine second hand. Whose teapot was this before it was mine? Who sold me the teapot and took it to the local markets so that I could purchase it? Then there is the question of money, currency, milk, cows, grass, the silver of my mother's teaspoon. What story does that spoon have and how did it get to Australia? What about my favourite bone china cup? Who has been involved in the Cornish china clay industry that has ultimately led to my cup? And then there are the potteries. What about the chair I am sitting on? And my ancestors, the ones whose genes, habits, socialisation and conditioning I carry and am informed by? How are they involved in this tea drinking moment? I am obviously not alone this afternoon, and yet, here I am, enjoying solitude and contemplation over my cup of tea.

I have used this simple exercise of Hearn's as a professional learning process in education. Aboriginal people teach me that they regard their culture, family, and connection to country as being of prime importance. Relating for them is a vital and primary aspect of their human life. They talk of relationship within communities, families, land and their cultural practices as being synonymous with meaning. Greg Lehman, a Tasmanian

Aboriginal writer teaches us that “writing about land and identity, finding new stories to tell of our culture and history - these are the ways that I honour my ancestors and live my life as a *palawa* man.” He talks of loss that “touches our spirits with sorrow and a sense of absence...but loss, in this sense, is not to be equated with destruction. The absence we feel is like a space that is left by lost love” (Lehman in Reynolds, 2006, p.34).

Ian Barbour, a leading interpreter of modern science (cited in Palmer, 1998), suggests that we are in an era where “nature is understood to be relational, ecological, and interdependent. Reality is constituted by events and relationships rather than separate substances or separate particles; we are now compelled to see nature as an historical community of interdependent beings” (Palmer, 1998, p.97).

Tarnas (2006) maintains that for the modern mind, the only source of meaning in the Universe is human consciousness and our human thoughts are separate from and stand apart from the world.

The modern mind engages the world within an implicit experiential structure of being a subject set apart from, and in some sense over against, an object.

The modern world is full of objects, which the human subject confronts and acts upon from its unique position of conscious autonomy. (Tarnas, 2006, p.16)

Tarnas suggests that an emergent way of Being is manifesting from the deconstructive flux of the post-modern mind towards a new understanding of reality. This paradigmatic shift, as he calls it, is informed and impelled by a deeper appreciation of the multidimensional complexity of reality and the necessity for a plurality of perspectives in which to approach it accompanied by a critical reappraisal of the epistemological limits and pragmatic consequences of the conventional scientific approach to knowledge. He suggests we are developing a more acute awareness of the ways in which subject and object are mutually implicated in the act of knowing. This is way of knowing that is more akin with the relationship of whole and part in all phenomena, as phenomenology shows us. We can revise our grasp of complex interdependence and subtle order in universal systems. Tarnas maintains that the “post-modern(ist)” human mind is beginning to recognise the inadequacy of reductionist ways of thinking that

relies on mechanistic and objectivised concepts of the natural world, suggesting, “The human being is a microcosm within the macrocosm of the world, participating in its interior reality and united with the whole in ways that are both tangible and invisible”(Tarnas, 2006, p.16).

The key component of the pedagogic relationship, says Buber, is “Inclusion”. He says, “Inclusion in this case means “making present” an act of imagining what the other person is thinking, feeling, and experiencing without surrendering one’s own stand...Inclusion is what is specifically required for a genuine dialogue to take place” (Kramer, 2013, Loc 606). Buber’s I/Thou notion of Inclusion springs from our relationship with the whole. Does our practice of relatedness through inclusion bring ourselves, as individuals, into the wholeness of the world?

### **To whom would the Universe open its deepest secrets?**

Tarnas (2006) invites us to put ourselves in the position of the Universe, one that is “A deep-souled, subtly mysterious cosmos of great spiritual beauty and creative intelligence” (p.39) and to imagine that we are being approached by two epistemologies or worldviews and asks to whom we would open our deepest secrets?

How would it be to *know* that we belong to a universe to which we are inextricably related? Would we cultivate a curiosity and practice to support us to ponder on the places, people, events and experiences that have contributed to the arising of this moment, as we did in the ground of Being exercise?

### **Connection and coherence, is this what is real? A personal exploration in connectedness**

Hearn, my Buddhist teacher, suggests it takes a whole universe to make a cherry pie. My pondering over the contributing factors that lead to enjoying a cup of tea is just the beginning. How can I be separate from other phenomena? How can I maintain a stance of separation, division and autonomy, as if there is the rest, and me, as I have been encouraged to live and act in line with my social and cultural inheritance?



I am connected to my family through my ancestry. The choices and opportunities that were available to my forebears have links to me. I inherit a genetic code and I am influenced by their language, life choices, diet, education, race and ethnicity, and country of origin. I may not have direct experience of their thoughts, aspirations, dreams, secrets, mistakes and all aspects of their everyday lives but I am nevertheless shaped by the actions of those who have gone before me. They too could not exist without the vast web of life to which we all belong. Who am I? I have a sense of separateness yet I am not separate. So could my sense of separateness be better described as a sense of identity? I presume that my experience is my own; that I may share experiences with others but 'I' am the only one who experiences 'my' experiences. I am unique, autonomous, and simultaneously, fully integrated into a universe that appears to know no bounds.

Who and what is needed to make a cherry pie? The cherries need seeds from previous cherry trees, soil, water, organisms and humus, worms, microbes, and sunlight. The same goes for wheat for the pastry. It gets more complicated after that, we need butter from domestic animals, cows on this occasion, together with the traditions and knowledge surrounding the farming of cows and the making of butter and then the making of pastry. This involves mixing butter, water, salt and flour in appropriate proportions and shaping it to make a shell and crust for the cherries. We need a heatproof container or pie dish and some kind of oven. We need people, generations of people, who have discovered and mastered the arts of farming, pottery, cooking, transportation, packaging, advertising, marketing, preserving, and utilising the world's resources, and that of the entire solar system. We need the Universe that supports the solar system in order to make our cherry pie. If it takes an entire universe to make a cherry pie it follows that it takes an entire universe to 'make' each moment as it occurs, which contributes to all subsequent moments as they occur, and is linked through temporality. Sokolowski (2000) and Buber (1970) say, as we participate through, across and in time we are part of an unbroken whole.

The selection criteria for my teacher-training course in adventure education were unconventional. We were required to traverse a rough slate

building, slide backwards down a wooden staircase to emulate the conditions for a caving expedition, and cross an imaginary river using a minimum of props. We had to demonstrate cooperation and imagination in our small team. I was one of 12 people selected from 80 applicants. We were selected, not so much for our competence as rock climbers, mountaineers, cavers or kayakers, but for our willingness to face challenges and use our skills of balance, discretion, judgement, communication and cooperation. We were chosen because of our willingness to display determination and courage. We were chosen because we could demonstrate our potential to develop integrity.

I began a journey of self-discovery that forced me to draw on personal dimensions that allowed me to face fear, discomfort, cold, exhaustion, exhilaration, and a deep sense of satisfaction, inner quiet and connectedness. I matured through my experiences in community in wild areas of mountain, cave, river and coastal systems. I reflect on those times and realise that my training did much more than equip me to become an adventure educator. It provided the foundations of a philosophy of belonging and interconnectedness and assisted me to cultivate my relationship with my inner and outer landscape. I was developing an integral state of being.

As I explore the work of Palmer I am exhilarated and humbled to discover his emphasis on the importance of teachers' identity, integrity, sense of belonging, and courage to embark on the adventure of teaching that requires an integral state of being. Palmer explores the significance of "the inner landscape of the teaching self" (1998, p.5), stressing the importance of intellectual, emotional and spiritual integrity that depend on one another for wholeness. "The more familiar we are with our inner terrain, the more surefooted our teaching - and living - becomes" (p.5).

John O'Donohue's poem and Palmer's invitation to pay attention to our integral states of being inspires me to find courage to look within and be embraced in belonging through encounters with my lifeworld.

### **An (indigenous) Celtic blessing**

May you listen to your longing to be free.  
May the frames of your belonging be large  
enough for the dreams of your soul.  
May you arise each day with a voice of  
blessing whispering in your heart that something  
good is going to happen to you.  
May you find a harmony between your soul  
and your life.  
May the mansion of your soul never become  
a haunted place.  
May you know the eternal longing that is at  
the heart of time.  
May there be kindness in your gaze  
when you look within.  
May you never place walls between  
the light and yourself.  
May your angel free you from the prisons  
of guilt, fear, disappointment and despair.  
May you allow the wild beauty of the invisible  
world to gather you, mind you and  
embrace you in belonging.  
(O'Donahue)

### **Embraced in belonging**

As O'Donohue reminds us "our quest for meaning, though often  
unacknowledged is what secretly sustains our passion and guides our

instinct and action. Our need to find meaning is urged upon us by our sense of life” (1998, p.132).

My quest to belong in my lifeworld and my quest for meaning sustains my passion and guides my action. I am awed by my experience of deep connectedness, friendship, trust and respect for the interrelatedness of existence that has allowed me to journey so deeply with my colleagues and students.

Palmer reminds us that we all do well when we have a sense of belonging. Unfortunately this is not reflected in our education systems as he says that, “The mode of knowing that dominates education creates disconnections between, teachers, their subjects, and their students because it is rooted in fear” (Palmer, 1998, p.51). Palmer suggests that the way we regard truth can make incalculable differences to our teaching and learning environments. We can choose to regard truth as something to be delivered from authoritarian sources that encourage dictatorship or as a fictional whimsical act resembling anarchy. If on the other hand, “we regard truth as emerging from a complex process of mutual inquiry, (our learning environments) will look like a resourceful and interdependent community” (p.51). Palmer alerts us to how our attitudes and assumptions can shape our pedagogy. Our assumptions about knowing, he says “can open up, or shut down, the capacity for connectedness on which good teaching depends” (Palmer. 1998, p.56). Palmer explains that objectivism is our tendency to portray that truth is only achievable through physical and emotional disconnection to the things we want to know. Our objective ways show our fear in getting too close and therefore distorting our knowing of our subject matter. When things cease to be objects they become vitally interactive parts of our lives. Our fascination with their subjectivity threatens the purity of our objective knowing (1998, p.53). Can we find the courage to challenge our assumptions to open our capacity for connectedness and belonging?

Palmer tells the story of Barbara McClintock, the Nobel Prize winner for work in genetics, whose approach to her inquiry was to recognise that the genetics of living organisms are more complex and interdependent than anyone had imagined. She took time to observe and “develop a feeling for the organism” as McClintock described her work. Evelyn Fox Keller (cited

in Palmer), McClintock's biographer, summed up her work by stating that "McClintock, in her relation to ears of corn, achieved the highest form of love, love that allows for intimacy without the annihilation of difference" (Palmer. 1998, p.55).

Palmer suggests that these words both describe the essence of McClintock's work and also the heart of all authentic relationships that humans may have. He says they describe a way of living and knowing that is beyond fear of other, towards a respect, and indeed a need for, its otherness. He warns us that an objectivist, modern knowledge perpetuates a myth that knowledge is power, a power over that which has become disconnected from us. That power is leading us alarmingly to self-destruction and, of course, the destruction of our ecosystems. He invites us, rather, to practice knowing as a form of love, a relational way of knowing.

### **Autonomous forms, or aspects of more complex systems?**

Brent Davis, Dennis Sumara and Rebecca Luce-Kapler, in *Engaging Minds: Learning and Teaching in a Complex World*, prompt our examination of the complexities of learning, pedagogy, and schooling. In their introduction they discuss their reasons for choosing an image of an apple tree for the front cover of their book.

Apples and apple trees aren't autonomous forms, but aspects of more complex systems. They are embedded in larger ecologies of relationships. To understand why an apple tree produces such an abundance of fruit, for example, we must consider the life of the tree in relation to the life of the forest in which it is a part. An apple tree is caught up in webs of exchange, providing shelter and sustenance for insects and birds and mammals. They, in turn, pollinate its blossoms, distribute its seeds, and fertilise its roots. The interdependencies extend even further, as these living forms participate with others in the interchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide and in the movement of water around the planet-aspects of seasonal patterns and annual cycles that unite ground and sky, organic and inorganic, life and death, past and present. (Davis et al., 2000, p.viii)

The apple and apple trees, like the cherry pie are not autonomous forms. They, and the rest of our surroundings, and us, are embedded in larger

ecologies of relationship. Is our willingness to understand relatedness at the heart of understanding pedagogic good? We are not only interconnected and inextricably linked to the web of the Universe, we are interdependent beings who both belong and contribute to the Universe as it unfolds as a continuous dynamic process.

Our attention is drawn to the role apple trees and apples, and cherry pies, have played in a social context as a living record of recent human history. Apples have been used, adapted and manipulated into various hybrid forms across time and civilisations, and are manifest in almost all corners of the globe. “Each apple bears a trace of intertwined historical events and social movements, including industrialisation, urbanisation, capitalism, and modern science” (Davis et al., 2000, p. x). They go on to explain their choice by reminding us that the “very form of a tree is a record of its flow through time. Its precise pattern of branches on branches is simultaneously unpredictable and familiar” (Davis et al., 2000, p.x). It bears the similarities to the branching patterns seen in other trees and so many other natural forms such as the veins in leaves, mammalian circulatory systems, river deltas and lightening bolts. And is yet a unique product that draws its being from the complex dynamics of its own information stored in the original seed and the influences of its surrounding and interconnecting web of life.

The point for Davis, Sumara and Kapler of choosing the symbol of the apple tree is to remind us of the complexity of every moment. They point out that new discourses on learning and teaching are emerging that place school education in a complex ecology of unfolding events. These events depart from and reveal the poverty of dominant skills-based, management-orientated ideas of instruction to offer “more engaged, participatory and organic senses of teaching” (Davis et al., 2000, p.xi).

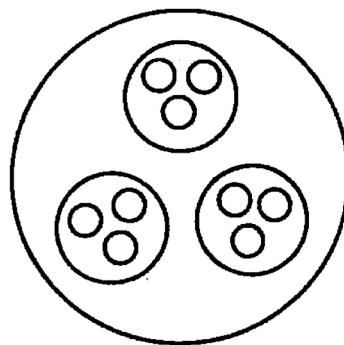
In reading the work of Davis, Sumara and Luce-Kapler I am reminded that the pre-modern mind did not regard Mind as being located in the body or that the human mind was something separate or distinguishable from the physical body. Mind was rather a concept viewed as something that human beings were part of. “An individual human was not understood to *have a*

*mind*. Rather, together humans *participated in Mind*; they were part of the wholeness of being” (Davis et al., 2000, p.160).

Sheldrake provides us with a diagram, *Figure 1. A nested hierarchy of wholes or holons*, below, to show he compares a Chinese box to a nested hierarchy of wholes or holons. Chinese boxes and Russian dolls are hollow and contain smaller replicas that fit into and nest inside one another. Each box or doll is whole in itself, and becomes a part of the larger whole. Sheldrake says, “Everywhere we look in nature, at whatever scale, we find wholes that are made up of parts that are themselves wholes at a lower level” (2012, p.49).

Arthur Koestler, cited in Sheldrake (2012), describes this phenomenon as a hierarchic order. Koestler says,

Every holon has a dual tendency to preserve and assert its individuality as a quasi-autonomous whole; and to function as an integrated part of an (existing or evolving) larger whole. This polarity between the Self-assertive and Integrative tendencies is inherent in the concept of hierarchic order. (2012, p.50)



*Figure 1. A nested hierarchy of wholes or holons*

Can we both participate in Mind *and* be mindful, as we are both individual datives of manifestation and integrated within a larger whole? Can we see ourselves as part of a system that is a “configuration of parts joined together by a web of relationships” (Sheldrake, 2012, p.50)?

A similar understanding of Mind is evident in Eastern wisdom traditions referred to in Laszlo's work as the Akashic Field. Laszlo asserts that every event, however small or apparently insignificant, affects all other aspects of existence. This is a far cry from our modern thoughts of being individual, isolated, fixed and insignificant.

As Davis, Sumara and Kapler point out, as focus shifted away from curiosity about the intertwining, interconnectedness of phenomena in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries toward delineating their difference, our thinking and research became more analytic. The term 'analysis', by definition, is to 'cut apart' or 'dismember' and the emphasis in modern thinking to think analytically has led to a powerful tendency to view phenomena through the use of taxonomies and classification and to regard objects of inquiry as being separate and distinct from the observer. "Where relationship was discussed in these schemes, it was overwhelmingly in terms of hierarchy, conflict, and conquest – as opposed to the emphases on co-implication and interdependency that were typical in pre-modern worldviews" (Davis et al., 2000, p.162). How different it is in phenomenology and hermeneutics when we take a step back with a phenomenological attitude to see for ourselves how embedded we are in our lifeworld.

Davis, Sumara and Kapler discuss the emergence of post-modern thinking which is generally agreed to be a "rejection of modernism, with its narratives of formal logic, objectified understandings, totalised knowledge, reductive assertions and universal laws. Rather our knowledge about things and self do not pre-exist one another as they are continually co-emergent phenomena" (2000, p.168). They describe the self from a post-modern perspective as being complex and situated ecologically, within a web of relationships, and that "An ecological post-modern view of existence relies on the uniqueness of individuals. In order for complex systems to remain viable, there must be diversity among the agents that comprise the system" (Davis et al., 2000, p. 176).

The following brief personal narrative illustrates my interpretive understanding of what the scholars and writers have been saying to me throughout this chapter. I discover through examining my lifeworld as a teacher that the cutting apart and dismembering that is still habitual practice



in modern schooling does little to serve our sense of connectedness and inclusion.

I met 110 students in five classes in my first week as a teacher at a new school. I was to teach all these students. I was in shock. How could we make a difference to one another's lives when there were so many of us, and when we were meeting for such a short time?

How do we begin to embrace each other in belonging when we are operating in a factory style of education punctuated by short lessons, large classes, constant disruptions and impersonal machine-like practices with emphasis on results that can be analysed at the expense of emphasis on process and relationship?

Are traditional school systems ready to embrace Davis, Sumara, and Kapler's ways of being that places us within a web of relationships? Laszlo (2008) proposes a New Scientific Reality that can change us, and our world. He sends an insistent message for us to shift away from our materialistic scientific view of reality. He urges us to respond in a new way that moves us from cultures and global civilisations he describes as *Logos* to that of *Holos*, to live with each other and not against each other. Laszlo recognises the challenge involved in shedding obsolete myths and beliefs. He maintains that,

In contemporary societies, a number of factors hinder the shift to a better vision. The way children are raised depresses their faculties for learning and creativity; the way young people experience the struggle for material survival results in frustration and resentment. (Laszlo, 2008, p.59)

What is our challenge as educators, pedagogues, members of the Universe and emerging datives of manifests? The way we think our world affects the way our world is, and affects all we encounter. Do we have an alternative but to become our world and be in our world? Laszlo warns,

In adults this (frustration and resentment) leads to a variety of compensatory, addictive, and compulsive behaviours. The result is the persistence of social and political oppression, merciless competition for resources and markets, cultural intolerance, crime, and disregard for the environment. (2008, p.59)

Can we take Jiddu Krishnamurti's advice, cited in Laszlo, when he states,

It seems to me that a totally different kind of morality and conduct, and an action that springs from the understanding that springs from the whole process of living, have become an urgent necessity in our world of mounting crises and problems. (Laszlo, 2008, p.59)

What is this different morality and conduct? How can our conduct spring from our understanding of the whole process of living? We are being urgently called to change our thinking, and thus our behaviour, to give humanity a chance to free ourselves from a cycle of despair resulting in our collective disregard for our 'home', our world. Krishnamurti continues by saying, "We try to deal with these issues through political and organisational methods, through economic readjustment and various reforms; but none of these things will ever resolve the complex difficulties of human existence" (Laszlo, 2008, p.59).

Laszlo tells us there is a revolution which is entirely different and which must take place if we are to emerge from the endless series of anxieties, conflicts, and frustrations in which we are caught. This revolution has to begin, not with theory and ideation, which eventually prove worthless, but with a radical transformation in the mind itself.

He maintains that human consciousness is not a permanent fixture and that it is our consciousness that has changed significantly over our modern human thirty thousand year history rather than our bodies. He urges that our collective destiny and survival is highly likely to depend on our willingness to shift our global consciousness away from our current prevailing beliefs towards a more sustainable interconnected worldview that calls for global cooperation and tolerance.

Competition, conquest, colonisation, consumption and a growth model that is extensive underscore our current, predominantly Western, value system. Success, he believes, is measured through economic growth with ever increasing demands on the planet's resources to satisfy our hunger and greed. Intensive growth, he suggests, concentrates on the personal and collective development of individuals and communities. This communal approach is more focused on connection, communication and consciousness. The world of quantum physics demonstrates that every quantum is connected with every other quantum and that each organism in

the biosphere is intrinsically connected with other organisms. For Laszlo, we are intrinsically connected on a quantum level to one another, to and through the ecosphere. The connections already exist. We have been conditioned to overlook the extent of our interconnection. Our recent and ongoing economic ‘crisis’ alerts us to the intrinsic interconnection that exists in our trade and financial systems. Our collective goal and intention to augment and recognise our connectedness in the global financial arena is to order and create coherent structure in the place of random proliferation.

Communication and consciousness grow from and is complemented by a profound appreciation of connection. Our primary task in the quest for intensive growth as individuals is to learn to develop and nurture our communication with ourselves and to embark on a journey of caring for and deliberately developing our consciousness and personality. We need to be in touch with ourselves in order to achieve balance and to communicate with our immediately surrounding communities. (Laszlo, 2008, p.50)

The challenge for teachers and school systems is to recognise that our current system perpetuates the problems resulting from random proliferation. We need to be in touch with ourselves as a starting point it seems. Laszlo states,

The development of our consciousness however facilitates and reveals purpose for our development of connection and community, thus providing motivation for the effort required for intensive growth. A high development of consciousness reveals ever more subtle layers of connectedness that in turn can lead to a shift in emphasis. Consciousness of these connections could enable us to shift from today’s power- and conquest-hungry Logos-civilisation to a Holos-civilisation centred on the growth of individuals and the sustainability of the human communities and the biosphere. (2008, p.50)

I share both Laszlo and Palmer’s concerns and ask, as Palmer did of himself, “How can my selfhood become a legitimate topic in education and in our public dialogues on educational reform?” (1998, p.10)?

### **Space which cannot be cut**

Alan Rayner, a biologist who has spent much of his adult life studying the behaviour of mitochondria present in fungal systems, urges us to

acknowledge space as an insubstantial “possibility for movement”, that permeates within, around and through every ‘thing’. In his website, [inclusional-research.org](http://inclusional-research.org), Rayner maintains, “There are no paradoxes of completeness in this perspective because there are no discrete bodies” (Rayner). He believes our modern understanding of space is hindered by the illusion that matter is solid with massy particles, surrounded by, and exclusive of space that is non-interactive. Rayner suggests we “unthink” our habitual ways of viewing space and matter as being separate, and move towards a notion of inclusionality. Our dualistic thinking encourages us to view ourselves, and everything we encounter, as being separate things floating in space that is separate from and non-interactive with anything else. He poses that boundaries occur, as they do, in quantum and mitochondrial worlds. Both worlds form and are formed by the coincidence of inner and outer inductive realms as complex, variably resistive, dynamic, space-incorporating transitions. He says, “As such they both distinguish and reciprocally couple the local, inner (individual) and non-local, outer (collective).” (Retrieved April 2015, <http://www.inclusional-research.org>).

Rayner offers us hope with his inclusionality theories to free ourselves from imagining things as being separate and isolated, to “unthink” the entrenched thinking of our inherited western minds in order to pass through and reform traditions of responses to suffering and conflict, once we can give up thinking we are exceptional to nature. Our unthinking and reforming might melt icy traditions to form pools of shared understanding like those in Bohm’s kind of dialogue. Might living in such warmed pools encourage us to follow Rayner and come to think of ourselves as being receptively and responsively inclusive of, what he terms, “our natural neighbourhood”?

Might we fully become participants in Mind, and appreciate the possibility of already fully belonging to our universe, and be able to see truthfulness — worldviews create worlds? Might we start with the possibilities for self-understanding?

## CHAPTER 3

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### A PORTRAIT OF SELF, AND SELF-TRANSFORMATION

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Our stories of self can be stories of self-transformation. The writing of them itself is an act of self-transformation. As we encounter self in our stories we witness our selves shifting and changing, and transforming as we cooperate with our natural propensity to move towards wholeness. We shift and change as we tell our stories. We become fully engaged as self as we are witness, author, participant, and agent of manifestation in our lifeworld.

A portrait, according to Wikipedia, is an artistic representation of a person, in which the face and its expression is predominant. The intent is to display the likeness, personality, and even the mood of the person. A portrait is more than a snapshot, but a composed image of a person. A portrait often shows a person looking directly at the artist, in order most successfully to engage the subject with the viewer.

As a subject in my portrait of self I am challenged to look directly at myself with the intention of being fully engaging and engaged. Storytelling and portraiture are hermeneutic devices to illuminate, examine and encounter aspects of self that may otherwise remain hidden.

#### **Self, and self-transformation in the making**

Jackie Siedel and Jardine (2014) tells us how our stories, which we bring back from the hills of our lifeworld, help us to find hidden parts of ourselves that we find within them. They can affect us. Our lifeworld that we share through our stories, our hermeneutic journey, arrives as “a task

that is never entirely finished” (Gadamer, 1989, p.127). Jardine urges us to turn to hermeneutics that embraces phenomenology but takes a further turn to go beyond it.

Hermeneutics is never simply a “report on my experiences”. This task of living a life in the life of the world is one whose contours are often occluded, absent, portending, lying, anticipatory, forgotten, suppressed, and we each feel our own deeply embodied culpability in precisely this mess. (Jardine, in Seidel & Jardine, 2014, p.61)

My portrait of self is in this making. I share my stories, and those of others in the hermeneutic tradition that shows me that “Understanding our lives and our way through the world must always be risked” (Seidel & Jardine, 2014, p. 61). My self-transformation “describes my own intimate experience with the story that is unfurling as a task that no one can undertake for me, instead of me or on my behalf. It is a venture I must take on myself” (p. 61).

### **Relatedness: A world into which we are drawn**

Caroline stood near me with her hands on her hips. “How come *you* get it Vicky?” she exclaimed. “You understand. You understand us. I feel respected by you.”

What is it that I get, I wonder? How did I get to understand and respect Caroline and her people?” Caroline tells me that people who *don’t* understand frustrate her. She tells me that she finds the way of understanding she refers to as complicated to explain. It is deeply layered and subtle. How do we learn to *get* each other?

What lies at the heart of our capacity to understand and respect one another? Caroline is a Tasmanian Aboriginal woman. Her people have survived and thrived in the face of more than two hundred years of colonialism that nearly destroyed them, along with their languages, culture, and connection to their country. I am from England and have adopted Australia as my home. Or have the Aboriginal people of Australia adopted me? I have learned from Caroline about her ways and what she values. I have learned to *get it*.

What is it that Caroline and I recognise in one another that gives us our deep respectful connection? Caroline tells me that her people really trust me. “It comes out in the way that you talk,” she says. “You know that when we tell you stories, or take you to the rock pools by the ocean; when we show you our special things that you don’t want to take things from us. You show us that you value what we share with you.” How can we teach others about deep listening and respect?

The tiny spiral seashell sits in the palm of my hand. It is a gift to me from Caroline and our team of Aboriginal co-workers. They know where to find the precious shells when they hunt and forage amongst the kelp and in the rock pools by the ocean. This is their place. These small spiral shells continue to be used for shell necklace making by Aboriginal women, whose past generations have made similar necklaces for the last several thousand years. My colleagues come alive here on this windswept and sun-kissed afternoon. I follow their lead and potter and clamber amongst the pools as the waves crash beside me. I am surrounded by country, their country. I am a guest amongst my colleagues. We share a pedagogic moment as we explore, share, hang out together, and wonder. “It would not deserve the interest we take in it if it did not have something to teach us that we could not know by ourselves” (Gadamer, 1989, p.xxxv, cited in Seidel & Jardine, 2014, p.32). Caroline presents herself to me as “a being reposing in itself” (Gadamer, 1977, p.227) and as Jardine points out as he quotes Gadamer, “in this very moment of (each being) reposing in itself, it breaks forth as if from a centre and...causes the whole...to which it belongs to resonate and the whole world that underlies it to appear” (Gadamer, 1989, p.458). I discover that my colleagues’ reposing radiance lights up “a world into which we are drawn” (Gadamer, 1994, pp. 191-2).

The whole world appears when I am among my colleagues by the ocean. The whole world appears in the tiny shell they gift to me. We break forth from our centres as we commune by the rock pools, and reveal ourselves to one another, causing the whole to which we belong to resonate.

Jardine alerts us to what Je Tsong-kha-pa urges us to do, “Cultivate love for those who have gathered to listen” (Tsong-kha-pa, 2000, p.64). Are we learning to cultivate love as we gather to listen to each other, to the wind,

the waves, and the shells that tell us about continuous necklace making throughout time, across time? Are we learning to cultivate love of being whole beings as we reveal our reposing radiance?

### **Cultivating love as we gather to listen**

Palmer (1993), an educator whose passion for authentic knowing shines through his work, observed that his involvement in education “at its deepest reaches” provided him with an identity as a knower, and that his knowledge gained became a source of self-understanding as one whose nature it is to know. In contemplating questions such as “Who am I?” and “What is the world?” he argues that education teaches us that the world is what our knowledge pictures it to be and that “The scope of the world becomes identical with the scope of our knowledge of it” — our knowledge of the world becomes the world itself. We cultivate love for those who gather to listen.

He warns of our modern, positivist, contemporary understanding of education that portrays the self as knower and the world as known, and mediates the relation of the two, giving the knowing self supremacy over the known world. How deeply must we reach towards self-education, education of self, and self-understanding for us to know our world and let our knowing of the world become our world? Is this what Caroline refers to when she notices that I *get it*? How do I position myself as a knower? How does my journey towards self-discovery allow me to let my knowing of the world become my knowing of self? Does my identity as a knower of my self allow my world to reveal itself so that I can become my world? What is it that frustrates Caroline when people don’t *get it*? What is it that we do and don’t get?

Palmer’s discussion of epistemology, an inquiry into the dynamics of knowing, reveals the extent to which we are governed by assumptions that underlie our understanding of the nature of the knower, the nature of the known and the nature of the relation between the two. He suggests that the patterns of epistemology can help us understand the patterns of our lives. Our ways of being, our images of the knower and the known, and the



relationship between knower and known, are formative in the way an educated person not only thinks, but acts. “The way we interact with the world in knowing it becomes the way we interact with the world as we live in it” (Palmer, 1993, p. 21-22).

Tarnas (2006) regards our modern worldview as one that “experiences a radical separation between subject and object, a distinct division between the human self and the encompassing world” (p. 16). He maintains that for the modern mind, the only source of meaning in the Universe is human consciousness — a stance that contradicts sharply with pre-modern human beings who regarded the surrounding natural world as permeated with meaning, and that for them, “The human being is a microcosm within the macrocosm of the world, participating in its interior reality and united with the whole in ways that are both tangible and invisible” (p.16).

Our worldview is not simply the way we look at the world. It reaches inward to constitute our innermost being, and outward to constitute the world. It mirrors but also reinforces and even forges the structures, armourings, and possibilities of our interior life. It deeply configures our psychic and somatic experience; the patterns of our sensing, knowing and interacting with the world. Worldviews create worlds. (Tarnas, 2006, p.16)

The emergence of a western worldview appears as though, “the modern mind engages the world within an implicit experiential structure of being a subject set apart from, and in some sense over against, an object” (p.17).

For Tarnas, whilst the modern world is filled with objects that are subjected to us, the subjects, a pre-modern way of knowing positions subjects “embedded in a world of subjects. Such a world is “saturated with subjectivity, interiority, intrinsic meaning and purposes” (2006, p.17). As Tarnas differentiates the pre-modern experience, a *participation mystique*, from the modern one, a subject/object dichotomy, he illustrates that our modern dichotomy has led to the differentiation of the self from the world. In contrast, in the pre-modern world, the self is first. Is Caroline’s reference to the ways we understand each other — as being deeply layered and subtle, respectful and co-creative — and her appreciation of the way I *get it* spring from her being embedded in a worldview as a *participation mystique*? Does her

frustration with people who don't *get it* reflect our dominant culture that is caught in a subject/object dichotomy? Does Caroline get tired of being treated and regarded as an object by subjects, who set apart, over and against, objects? Is this how we treat one another without realising how our worldviews create worlds?

Is our modern dilemma one of separation of knower from known? What suffering and pain are we perpetuating when the individual is separated from the encompassing matrix of being, which leads to an inevitable disenchantment of the world? Our disenchantment produces a radical relocation of the ground of meaning and conscious intelligence, from the Universe as a whole, to the human individual self, alone.

Tarnas suggests, encouragingly for me, that an emergent way of being is manifesting from the “deconstructive flux of the post-modern mind towards a new understanding of reality” (2006, p.26). This paradigmatic shift is informed and impelled by a deeper appreciation of the multidimensional complexity of reality and the necessity for a plurality of perspectives in which to approach this new way of being. Tarnas asks us to critically reappraise the epistemological limits and pragmatic consequences of the conventional scientific approach to knowledge, and acquire together a more acute awareness of the ways in which subject and object are mutually implicated in the act of knowing.

This is a way of knowing more akin with the relationship of whole and part in all phenomena and offers a revised grasp of complex interdependence and subtle order in universal systems. Optimistically, says Tarnas, he suggests the post-modern human mind is beginning to recognise the inadequacy of reductionist ways of thinking that relies on mechanistic and objectivised concepts of the natural world.

When we gather to listen and love do we participate in transformational moments that bespeak the inadequacy Tarnas illuminates when we remain in a subject/object dichotomy? Can we listen and love from our positioning as a separate self over and above an objective world? Do we *get it* when we turn towards each other as subjects inextricably connected to a subjective world? Is our emergent way of being linked to the way we cultivate love as

we gather to listen? Is that how we *get it*? What is it that we learn as we gather shells together on the beach? Does our pedagogic moment of mutual wonder and respect form and transform us towards becoming our world? Do we, in those moments, participate in pedagogic moments of relatedness?

### Relating to the Universe

Tarnas (2006) invites us to put ourselves in the position of the Universe — one that is a deep-souled, subtly mysterious cosmos of great spiritual beauty and creative intelligence and to imagine that we are being approached by two epistemologies, world-views or “suitors” and asks to whom we would open our deepest secrets. Would it be to the way of knowing that regards the Universe as having no intelligence, purpose, interior dimension, spiritual capacity or value? “Or would you, the cosmos, open yourself most deeply to that suitor who viewed you as being at *least* as intelligent and noble, as worthy a being, as permeated with mind and soul, as imbued with moral aspiration and purpose, as endowed with spiritual depths and mystery, as he” (p.39).

This suitor is more interested in seeking to know the cosmos, not in order to more completely exploit it for its resources but to become united to bring forth a creative synthesis that arises from mutual depth. This suitor is not seeking an accumulation of knowledge to achieve mastery and control but is willing to open to and liberate understandings that have been hidden through separation and divisions between knower and known. This suitor “seeks an intellectual fulfilment that is intimately linked with imaginative vision, moral transformation, empathetic understanding and aesthetic delight...an act of love and intelligence combined, of wonder as well as discernment, of opening to a process of mutual discovery” (Tarnas, 2006, p.39).

We wandered in delight as we felt the sea breezes, collected the kelp, and wondered at the intricacies of the sea animals that shared the same rock pool. We encountered hermit crabs that occupied a vacated shell from another animal. We gathered to look together at the spirals on the shells, reflecting sacred universal patterns. We communed with each other and all

that was within and around us in intellectual fulfilment. Were we behaving like 'Tarnas' suitor, with imaginative vision and empathetic understanding? Were we engaged in an act of love, intelligence and wonder.

Bohm expresses frustration and concern at our modern tendency to regard the natural world as an aggregate of separately existent parts that he regards as contributing to conflict and confusion. Does Caroline reflect Bohm's frustration when she experiences our fragmentary approach to our natural world, and way of being that classifies, separates and judges? As with the suitor in the 'Tarnas' story, do we habitually regard the Universe as having no intelligence, purpose, interior dimension, spiritual capacity or value? Bohm maintains that,

Wholeness is what is real, and that fragmentation is the response to this whole that man, with his fragmentary approach, will inevitably be answered with a correspondingly fragmentary response. So it is for man to give attention to his habit of fragmentary thought, to be aware of it, and thus bring it to an end. Man's approach to reality may then be whole, and so the response will be whole. (Bohm, 1980, p.9)

For Bohm it becomes crucial that we are aware of the activity of thought *as such*, as a form of insight, or a way of looking, rather than as a true copy of reality as it is, as irrefutable objects and facts. We are implored to consider our different ways of thinking as different ways of looking at the one reality. We are urged to bring attention and clarification to what is meant by the relationship between the content of thought and the process of thinking. Content and process, rather than being separately existent things, are two aspects or views of one whole movement.

My way of looking, my relationship between content of thought and process of thinking, helps me to relate authentically to my Aboriginal colleagues. It is our challenge to support ourselves to become free of our habits of fragmentary thought and discover methodologies and practices that help us to see the world as my colleagues do. I believe it possible to apply such practices in the field of education. I tell my stories of self-exploration in deep and non-ordinary states of awareness as part of my portraiture to illustrate and examine how such practices helps me to relate to my world — on the beach, in the classroom and with my colleagues. I

look directly at the viewer as I tell the following hermeneutic stories and take a phenomenological stance to look at the things themselves for meaning.

### **Searching for meaning, opening to a process of mutual discovery of self and other**

A significant part of my lifeworld and lived experience is my work in the field of Holotropic breathwork. It is a technique established by Stanislov Grof and Christina Grof to support people interested in exploring deeper dimensions of the human psyche (1988, 2010). I have been a student of Stanislov Grof for many years. I am an experienced facilitator and participant in this field. My experiences in enhanced and non-ordinary states of awareness present to me phenomena I do not have access to in my usual everyday awareness. My understanding of my world becomes my knowing of the world and myself, my knowing becomes my world.

In this chapter I focus upon the process of Holotropic breathwork, and offer interpretive accounts of my personal experience as a participant. I pursue my hermeneutic phenomenological interpretive adventure by exploring this field that concerns itself with relatedness and pedagogic moments.

Holotropic breathwork is a technique combining controlled breathing, evocative music and focused bodywork that can induce a wide spectrum of experiences used to explore deeper dimensions of the psyche. It is generally practiced in a group setting where participants support one another in breathing/sitting dyads or partnerships, taking turns to participate in a three hour session as a breather, the one entering a non-ordinary state, and as a sitter, the one providing support for the breather. Two or more facilitators support the group throughout the session including leading the preparation for the sessions, the sessions themselves, and integration and follow up. The facilitators pay particular attention to the quality of the set, the participants themselves and all they bring to the occasion, and the setting, the environment in which the work takes place, during breathwork sessions to provide high quality support for the people entering into enhanced states of awareness.

An enhanced state of awareness is one that allows us to experience phenomena that are otherwise hidden from us in our usual state. People have used techniques to explore and make meaning by intentionally inducing enhanced states of awareness throughout the course of human history. There are many accounts of ancient people using physical and biological processes such as meditation, drumming, fasting, special breathing techniques, dance, ingesting plants and, more recently, chemical compounds to induce non-ordinary states of consciousness. The western scientific, modern paradigm has tended to ignore and discredit meaning-making resulting from these practices. I have turned to the practice of Holotropic breathwork to search for meaning and, perhaps, to break from my habituated fragmentary thought.

A.M. Ludwig's seminal definition of altered states of consciousness is, ...any mental state(s) induced by various physiological, psychological, or pharmacological manoeuvres or agents, which can be recognized subjectively by the individual himself (or by an objective observer of the individual) as representing a sufficient deviation in subjective experience or psychological functioning from certain general norms for that individual during alert, waking consciousness. (Ludwig, 1966, p.225, cited in Heinze, 1994, p.8)

Grof suggests that the practice of Holotropic breathwork acts as an amplifier or catalyst of mental processes that seems to activate pre-existing matrices, or potentials of the human mind, and that participants can take a fantastic journey into the unconscious and super-conscious mind. He describes how this practice reveals, and makes available for direct observation, "a wide range of otherwise hidden phenomena that represent intrinsic capacities of the human mind" (Grof, 1985, p.30).

Whilst Tarnas and Bohm use the term "wholeness" to describe our relationship with the whole, then Grof refers to the natural capacity for all beings to move towards a state of wholeness.

Grof uses his own term "holotropic" derived from the Greek terms *holos*, wholeness, and *tropic*, movement towards, referring to our capacity to move towards wholeness. He maintains that if we practice this form of breathing meditation we can cooperate primally with our natural and innate

propensity to move towards wholeness. Is a horse a whole horse when it fully embraces its essence as a horse? Can we appreciate our selves as our essence of who we are, our humanness? Can I explore my self-ness and appreciate my own essence through my hermeneutic writing and become whole?

What is wholeness? Is wholeness something we as humans can aspire to? How do we know if and when we are whole? Can we look to the things of the world to find examples of wholeness? Is a butterfly whole when it is fully butterfly-like? Does the same principle apply to broad beans, dogs, cows, apple trees and humans? Is a human whole, or moving towards wholeness, when she or he is fully human-like? Is wholeness a fixed state, or is wholeness a dynamic state of being? If we are to be whole, do we acquire a state of being that allows us to be fully and dynamically part of and aware of our lifeworld, whilst being reflective and linguistic datives of manifestation? Is meaning revealed to us as humans as we become agents of consciousness to which the world reveals its secrets? Are we embraced and embracing of our world when we are able to explain and describe our world in *its* wholeness, with its correlates of time, space, presences and absences, parts and wholes, sides, aspects and profiles? Are we whole when we perceive the world as being whole?

### **Toward wholeness: Searching for healing**

I began practicing Holotropic breathwork with no pre-conceived ideas of what to expect. I knew nothing of Grof or his theories and experiences. I was willing to have a go without questioning much about what it was about. My brother had recently suicided and I was grieving. I needed help.

I was invited to lie on a mattress in the session room with my eyes closed. I was to wait for some music to come on and breathe deeply and continuously, a little like some yogic breathing practices. The music was loud. It was surprisingly comforting to be surrounded by the loud music. It seemed to be travelling through me as well as around me. I felt as if I *was* the music. It became part of me. I was hearing and experiencing rhythmic drumming,

chanting and melodic voices. I felt at home with and within the whole experience of bathing in sound, rhythm and music. I was breathing deeply and continuously. I wanted to move my body. I started moving. I got lost in the movement and fluidity of my body as it responded to and blended with the music. I was moving and squirming and pushing and writhing like a creature trying to get out. I was moving both with and against my surroundings. I had moved up against a nearby wall of cushions and was pushing against them. I felt both trapped and contained as I worked my way along the wall like a burrowing animal moving along a very constricting tunnel that was just too small for me to travel through. I had to wait for the tunnel to open up a little to let me through before it closed again behind, in front and around me. I was energised, excited and terrified as I experienced alternately being trapped and then released from the grip of my 'tunnel' long enough to inch along before being constrained again. I was doing the movement, or was it the tunnel that was moving me? Was I working against the force of the tunnel, or was I cooperating with its rhythmic movements? What would happen if I stayed where I was? Why did it matter to move? Where was I moving to and why did this feel so familiar for me? I already knew this story. I was re-enacting an event that I had already experienced. I was just moving and breathing, and recognising the familiarity of my strange experience. I found myself in the corner of the room with my head pushing against the cushions where I was able to eventually break out and move away from the corner to find freedom and space. I had completed my journey. There was space and light all around me. I lay exhausted and jubilant. My journey was over. I had arrived. I had been released from my tunnel, cave, and prison. I was no longer captive. I was new, renewed. I had been born.

This was my experience in the session. Now I attempt to interpret my experience from the viewpoint of Sokolowski's phenomenological sense of structure. Sokolowski says, "From the phenomenological viewpoint we look at and describe, analytically, all the particular intentionalities and their



correlates, and world belief as well, with the world as its correlative” (2000, p. 47). I examine what Sokolowski is conveying in his attempt to describe phenomenology by interrogating my lived experience. Sokolowski helps me understand phenomenology — my lived experience helps me understand and apply phenomenology. I write, using the means and practices of phenomenology, to gain deeper sensitivity and understanding through my self-portrait.

I remember easily losing touch with any need to have a particular outcome and I remain very grateful that I didn’t have any expectations or suggestions of what may or may not happen in my first breathwork session. I was aware of my location in ordinary time and space throughout the entire experience and remained aware of all aspects of my physical surroundings, although my journey with the help of the cushions, walls and music was extraordinary.

I knew nothing about what to expect and I was willing to embark on the session with minimal instruction or intervention. I had entered into an enhanced state of awareness. I was seeing and hearing and moving my body in a very different way to my usual state. It was as if I was being transported by the music, rhythm and my breath to a different level of awareness. It was as if I was becoming my movements. I was being invited by the movements my body and mind were urged to do, as if I was following a pre-ordained dance.

I knew that I was in a room with a companion, who was watching over me and that I was listening to recorded music. I knew that I was moving around a part of the room near a wall with cushions and mattresses. My eyes were closed so even though I was aware of my current time/space situation of being in the room, I was also experiencing and perhaps re-experiencing elements of my early life from the time of my birth. I had the feeling and experience of being in the birth canal. I felt as though I was a creature embarking on a journey where I had no choice but to go on and I was being expelled from the place I had been residing. There were no clues or pre-conceived ideas available to me apart from my own body memory. My body was showing me what it already knew and it was telling me what it

had been like for me to be born. Was I was experiencing a re-living of being born from a physical, emotional and spiritual perspective? I was completely involved in the re-enactment as if I was being shown the quality of being born for the first time. It was as if I could both feel and know what it was like for me to be born. I was having my own story of my birth revealed to me through being in an enhanced state of awareness. To enhance is to intensify, increase, or further improve the quality, value, or extent of whatever is being enhanced. My awareness had transcended my ordinary awareness. My usual awareness was still operational. I was perhaps also aware of the process of my birth that my body and psyche was revealing to me that, until then, been hidden from me. I felt that I was re-experiencing being born. I had not been told what to expect. I had no pre-conceived ideas. No one had told me that I might re-experience my birth in such a tangible way.

I have done many more breathwork sessions since then and I have witnessed many others as a facilitator. I have discovered that I can have access to a vast range of experiences that become available to us. It was important for me to find out for myself that I can witness, experience and delve into my own psyche to recall and re-experience an event with such intensity.

How did I figure out that my experience correlated so precisely with my actual experience of being born? What use is this information to me in my life? How is my worldview affected by my experiences in enhanced states of awareness? Is my knowledge and awareness restricted to what I can experience through my usual senses? Can phenomenology assist me to make meaning of my experiences?

I later talked with my mother about my birth. She described the rhythmic movements and contractions, the waiting, the urgency for both of us, and the last and final push when I left her body and was born. My mother gave birth to four children and she confirmed that each one was different. We agreed that my non-ordinary excursion into my psyche revealed details about my birth that matched her memory of that event. My enhanced awareness experience had allowed me to re-visit an experience in my

lifeworld that I could not have described without re-living it in such a tangible way.

My next step is to remember what Sokolowski says about referring to evidence and evidencing. Sokolowski reminds us that when we refer to evidence and evidencing in phenomenology we recognise that “evidence is the successful presentation of something whose truth becomes manifest in the evidencing itself” (2000, p.160).

We let the intelligible phenomena appear, “We are real as datives of manifestation, and what we do as such is to evidence the truth of things” (Sokolowski, 2000, p.161).

The truth of my experience is revealed to me as I step back from my lived experience and take a phenomenological turn. I am bracketing the experience and participating in an *epoché*, or transcendental phenomenological reduction. I let go of my belief that it is impossible to remember the experience of my birth. How can I remember my experience as a birthing baby? Was my mind and body developed enough to fully experience such an event? How can I recollect an experience many decades later that can be verified by my mother, who shared the experience as an adult with an adult memory that was fully developed?

“The things we experience present themselves as identities within manifolds of experience” (Sokolowski, 2000, p.112). My body movements, memories, and my recognition that I was re-experiencing an event that had been hidden from me are examples of identities that were presented to me within manifolds of experience. My initial experience of my birth that was now a memory was recalled in a bodily way in the present, which has now slipped within a new manifold of experience as a memory as I recall the event of the breathwork session.

When I bracket my presuppositions I concentrate on the experience itself. My body moved in such a way that it replicated, or re-enacted, the constriction and slow rhythmic movements that were synonymous with a birthing process. I felt what it was like from inside the experience and I recognised the experience as a memory that was stored somewhere in my system that was not usually available to me. I am bringing forth into the

present the absent moment of my birth and bringing the experience to the present moment through a recollection that is informed by the movements of my body. The objects are being presented to me in a mixture of presences and absences, sides, aspects and profiles, as a perception, a memory, and as a direct experience of re-living the event and recognising it as being a memory of a past event. My experience of birthing was verified by my mother's account of the same event that matched my experience. My writing is helping me to understand and make meaning of the event as being a part of my lived experience.

Phenomenology helps me to verify my experiences and gives me a philosophical process to look to lived experience and my lifeworld to make meaning. The philosophical analysis of this one event encourages me to approach work in enhanced states of awareness such as breathwork and dreams, to delve deeply into all aspects of my lived experience and fulfil my role as an agent of *noematic* truthfulness — the *noema* of my lifeworld being targets of philosophical analysis. I am healed through my breathwork experiences where I experience a paradigm shift away from our subject/object dichotomy and fragmentary thought and language towards getting glimpses of Tarnas' post-modern mind's worldview. I am healed through my hermeneutic writing and adventures in phenomenology that provides a framework for understanding. I am healed through my writing and attempts to make meaning. Taking my place as a dative of manifest in the entire matrix of being heals me. Am I moving towards wholeness?

### **Becoming phenomenological: Becoming the world**

I am 'having a go' at being phenomenological as I describe and interpret my experiences in ordinary, non-ordinary and enhanced states of awareness. I become my world as I become the knower of my world as it reveals itself to me. In striving to make meaning from my experiences I step into my life world, and then step back, as phenomenology teaches us, to take a hermeneutic turn, to examine the things themselves from a phenomenological attitude in a Tarnas-like cosmological transcendence. Might I in a phenomenological attitude be attuned in the way Tarnas refers in which I speak to a cosmos that is intelligent?

Sokolowski presents phenomenology as a philosophical movement and describes its language, purpose, application and possibilities for philosophical thinking. I am grateful to his work that draws on the work of Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger and many other philosophers from the phenomenological movement of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. I learn from Sokolowski's work and explain my understandings as follows. Phenomenology allows us to step back from our life in the natural attitude, where we have spontaneous experiences that comprise our everyday lifeworld that we inhabit as humans. Phenomenology invites us to adopt a transcendental attitude, a philosophical position, where we can suspend judgements and turn to the things themselves to shed light on our understanding and ways of knowing. Philosophy begins, says, Sokolowski,

...when we take up a new stance toward our natural attitude and all its involvements. When we engage in philosophy, we stand back and contemplate what it is to be truthful and to achieve evidence. We contemplate the natural attitude, and hence we take up a viewpoint outside it. This move of standing back is done through the transcendental reduction. Instead of being simply concerned with objects and their features, we think about the correlation between the things being disclosed and the dative to whom they are manifested. (2000, p.186)

Once we are within the transcendental reduction “we also carry out an eidetic reduction and express structures that hold not just for ourselves, but for every subjectivity that is engaged in evidencing and truth” (2000, p.186). The transcendental reduction in phenomenology equips us to allow our world to, once more, be filled with subjects. As with the second suitor in Tarnas' parable, our world becomes enriched with subjectivity, interiority, intrinsic meaning and purpose (Tarnas, 2006).

### **Contemplating the natural attitude: Stepping back and stepping in**

I tell a second account of a breathwork session and meditate upon it phenomenologically.

I took my place on a mattress somewhere in the middle of the room. My sitter was with me, I was to let go and trust. I breathed.

I felt tingling in my arms and legs, and then throughout my whole body. I stopped noticing others in the room. I continued to breathe. I felt my body responding to the rhythm of my breath and the music.

I became aware of an intense sense of strangulation. My throat was constricted and I was choking, choking, choking. I was coughing, spluttering, struggling. I could sense my sitter, beside me, paying attention. The constriction around my throat became unbearable. I wanted to put my own hands around my throat. It was as if I was the one wanting to do the strangling, and being strangled. I was helpless and in the grip of a constricting force that wanted to squeeze the life from me, and, I was my own constricting force. I wanted to cause harm to myself.

The feelings were intense. As I was putting my hands around my throat I felt my sitter intervene. She couldn't let me strangle myself. She encouraged me to keep coughing and spluttering. I was to keep coughing and spluttering as much as I could. She kept me safe when the experience got so intense. This went on forever. It felt like a lifetime. I was engaged in a deep struggle for survival. I was choking, and feeling choked. I was coughing, coughing, spluttering and spluttering. This was awful. And then. I vomited. I purged and let go, surrendered. It felt like I was dying. There was more coughing, more vomiting. I was spent, done, exhausted. The end. Silence. It was over. I slept.

This was dramatic. It was a deep opening experience. I lost track of time and space. I lost track of everything. I was only aware of being supported and held, in the stillness around me and within me. This was intense and ground breaking for me. I fully experienced being strangled and choked. I was supported to be completely involved in the experience that was intense, physical and frightening. It was afterwards that I experienced my whole being filling with a sense of spaciousness and grounding. It felt as if something had released from my body that had held me in a state of anxiety, fear and tension. Something had resolved. I felt as though I had

come home. I was astounded by the intensity and familiarity of my experience.

I didn't know what to make of my experience. My body knew what to do and I surrendered to and trusted what was being revealed to me in an enhanced state of awareness. I recalled that my brother strangled himself. He had hung himself and his suicide had an enormous impact on me. Was my experience also his experience? Was I privy to his experience in some way? Did I have access to his personal field? Was I experiencing something in my own biographical history? Was this feeling of strangulation something that is part of my own story and also part of my brother's story?

There are no appearances of things in phenomenology, says Sokolowski. Appearances are real and phenomenology allows us to recognise and restore our world that may have been lost to us if we continue to be locked in our own internal world where we believe that meaning is only ours, a private matter that is disconnected from that which we observe and experience beyond our perception of mind.

I choked, spluttered and vomited. I had the experience of strangling and being strangled. My body knew what to do and I was doing something that was familiar. There was nothing virtual or imaginary about my experience. I was not imagining being choked. My breathwork session allowed me to access a lived reality of strangulation that appeared and restored a world to me that may have been lost if I had not found phenomenology's doctrine of the intentionality of consciousness.

There is freedom for us in allowing the things to be themselves, and for us to know them as they are rather than our usual habitual way of knowing things as we 'think' they are. It is through this intending of the way things manifest themselves that we can allow ourselves to be truthful as we practise our ability to let things appear. We can intend the presentations and absences of things, as they are "exquisitely interwoven" (Sokolowski, 2000, p.15).

As philosophers and phenomenologists we are not to focus just on the objects, rather, we consider how the objects in the natural attitude are being presented to or being intended by the dative to which they are being

presented. Breathwork and dreams are the things themselves. “The perceived object looked at from the philosophical viewpoint and considered precisely as perceived, as the object correlate of perception, is the *noema* of perception” (Sokolowski, 2000, p.192). Phenomenology demands that we cannot see things as being separate entities. Parts are always part of a whole. “Perception involves layers of synthesis, layers of manifolds of presentation, both actual and potential” (Sokolowski, 2000, p.20). Sokolowski reminds us, consciousness is ‘of’ something in the sense that it intends the identity of objects, not just the flow of appearances and it intends the relation of objects to each other. Are parts always part of wholeness? He says, “The world may occur as parts that are pieces of wholes or wholes comprising pieces that can exist independently of one another. The world cannot be perceived or experienced by conscious beings without the flow of non-independent moments” (p.20).

Phenomenology, and my own experience, teaches us that our human consciousness is linked to our awareness of our wholeness. We become conscious when we allow the things to be themselves, when we leave things as they are in their entirety. We become whole as we fully participate in a world that is whole, that is comprised of parts that cannot be parts except as they relate and belong to whole-ness. We are no longer enclosed in the circle of our ideas.

### **Vividness and veracity of dreams: Presences, absences and the object correlate of perception**

I am travelling through the wilderness. I make my way along a ridge through the forest on the only track. The landscape is strange and unfamiliar. The way ahead is in bad repair. The torrential rain has washed the road away. There are deep rivulets where the water has gushed down the mountain. The erosion is extensive, leaving patches of bare ground and dying trees.

The land feels disturbed. The forest is struggling to adapt to the changes made by the road. There are potholes and signs of collapse. There have been attempts at repair. Large plastic pipes have been placed in the worst parts to help redirect the water.



There have been a series of emergency and temporary repairs with some of the pipes lying on top of other broken pipes. None of them are effective as the road continues to break down and the water continues to gush and erode the hillsides. My journey is long and arduous. I hear the words saying, “This is what happens when the Government manages the roads through the forest.”

I get to the top of the mountain and travel into a different country. The forest here is subject to the same natural conditions—the rain falls just as heavily in this land. I experience a profound difference in the condition of the road and the surrounding forest. I see that the forest is healthy, thriving and abundant. The road is in good repair. It is unaffected by the heavy rain. It is smooth and comfortable to travel on. What is different about this country?

The road is made of interlocking small flat rocks making a smooth porous surface that is strong enough to support small vehicles and absorbent enough to cope effectively with heavy rain. There are handmade stone drainage channels on either side of the track that divert heavy rain away from the road and towards the forest. The water gets to the forest at the right volume and absorption rate for ongoing growth and sustenance. The road is beautiful. It is handcrafted from local stone. There is no sign of road damage or need for urgent repairs. The road and the forest complement one another. It is engineered from local natural resources and eases its way through the forest. The forest allows space for the road to pass through. The voice that I hear tells me “This is the work of a community.”

The people here have known how to take the forest and weather conditions into account before building their road. I picture them noticing how the land lies and how weather affects the forest and the built environment. They understand biodiversity and are concerned with the ongoing health of the wilderness. They know their country. I marvel at the intelligent engineering that has contributed to this system of roads and drains. How do these

people know how to cooperate and navigate the wilderness so beautifully and effectively?

*Noema* are the object correlates of what we intend, what is presented to us in all its forms and aspects in the phenomenological transcendental attitude. “The term ‘*noema*’ refers to the objective correlates of intentionalities; it refers to whatever is intended by the intentions of our natural attitude...It refers to such objective correlates precisely as being looked at from the transcendental attitude” (Sokolowski, 2000, p.59).

Sokolowski maintains, “...the world, along with everything in it, is turned into a *noema* when we enter into phenomenological reflection” (2000, p.192). Our phenomenological thinking is *noematic*. It is a way of viewing and intending that describes the action of setting apart and bracketing our lifeworld in order to let our lifeworld reveal its meaning. We are not attempting to change, challenge, re-construct or otherwise tamper with the things presented to us in the natural attitude from the phenomenological perspective. We are allowing what is presented to us, in all its aspects and correlates, to reveal its meaning to us — who are unique datives of manifestation. We, on the one hand, are deeply embedded in the natural life world, we are the centre of each of our worlds, and who, from the transcendental perspective, make meaning and reveal a way of knowing that is informed by the things of the world.

My dream shows me two scenarios. In the first part of my journey I hear “This is what happens when the Government manage the roads.’ What happens when the Government manages the road? Who is the Government in my dream? The road was built in spite of the forest and its weather pattern. The introduction of the road was an imposition on the wellbeing and health of the forest. Some parts were dying and the gushing rainwater caused havoc to the road and damage to the land. The Government ignored the needs of the road and the forest. It ignored the prevailing conditions and the effect it had on the forest changed by the introduction of the road. How often do we have unintended consequences when we tamper with self-sustaining ecosystems? It imposed its road onto the forest environment and then did repeated and failed repairs to the road, not the forest, to keep the road open.

Who is the Government? What is being revealed to me through this dream? In what ways am I imposing the building of inadequate roads through my own wilderness based on a 'one size fits all' plan to forge my way through uncharted territory? Have I ignored the conditions and the terrain in my efforts to force my way into and through a living system for the purpose of 'getting through'? Do I disregard the impact to the very landscape I am traversing and exploring? Have I had to make a series of incongruent and clumsy running repairs to keep the road from collapsing? Is my Government my *status quo* of Cartesian 'inside my head' way of making meaning?

What of the second scenario? The community knew the forest and they dwelt there. They were willing to listen carefully to their country. Their questions could have gone like this: What do we take into account as we build a road through the forest? What materials do we have? How can the road hold up to the torrential rains? How do we ensure the runoff does not erode the very landscape that is our home? How can we know ourselves and our homeland? Does the community in my dream show me their way of living in harmony with their country? Does the harmony I find in my dream resonate with my experience of beach combing with my Aboriginal colleagues? Does the community *get it* in the way Caroline meant when she spoke to me telling me that I *get it*? Is my dream reflecting my self-transformational movement towards wholeness that is "deeply layered, subtle and complicated to explain" (Tarnas, 2006, p.39)?

The vividness of my dream strikes me with veracity of the kind that leans toward the truth of things (Sokolowski, 2008, p.20). Its truthfulness inspired me to remember, interpret and write about it while it was fresh. Phenomenological, hermeneutic reflection on consciously and subconsciously lived experience, helps me through interpretively and rigourously questioning all aspects of my lifeworld including my dreams and breathwork journeys. This shows what might be possible to learn from my dreams, delving deeply into often overlooked, and then forgotten, aspects of our lifeworld.

"My mind in action is the presenting, to myself and to others, of the grass as being wet" (Sokolowski, 2000, p.14). The grass being wet exists in

the wet grass, as Sokolowski would have it. We are constantly relating to our world, and it is in this conscious relationship of seeing things as they are that allow us to make meaning.

When we shift into philosophical reflection, when we execute the transcendental reduction, we do not concern ourselves only with our intentionality; we also consider the targets of that intentionality, the things that are given to our various modes of intending (perception, memory, imagination, anticipation, judgement, and the rest). (Sokolowski, 2000, p.191)

The target of my intentionality in this instance is my dream. I can only ever see an object from one angle. I cannot see an object from all aspects at once, yet I intend and co-intend the aspects that are hidden from me.

I have a perception of the table that is in front of me, and, like Sokolowski's perception of a cube (2000, p.17), I perceive this material object in its presences, absences, sides, aspects and profiles. I co-intend the sides that I can't see with my eyes. My perception is a blend of what I can and can't see from my current position.

"All experience involves a blend of presence and absence" (Sokolowski, 2000, p.18). It is an important philosophical realisation that we are constantly taking co-intended absences into account as we experience our dynamic world as a blending of what is present to us, and what is absent and yet has to be related, co-intended, in order for us to make full meaning of what is intended to us as agents of truth. I can walk around the table and intend the sides, aspects and profiles of its hidden, co-intended absences. As I do that of course, the aspects that were present will now become part of the absent intending of my perception of the table, and so it goes on, we are constantly slipping in and out of our filled and empty intendings.

My dream is filled with co-intended presences, absences, sides, aspects and profiles. It is a mode of intending given to me through perception, memory and imagination. It is a target of my intending that presents to me as a *noema*. My dream is as phenomenologically real as the table before me and presents to me as a range of filled and empty intendings.

## **Absence, presence, dreams, memories and reflections**

The absences are part of my intending, and part of my knowing. The presences related to what is presenting to me are co-intended. My subjectivity, or my knowing, involves intending what is present and intending the hidden elements, which are absent. There are filled and empty intendings in all that we perceive. Our perception is dynamic and constantly shifts as we shift our view. As our view shifts, the potentiality of the absence is revealed. What is absent comes into view, and what was in view slips out of view into absence, but remains part of my intending. It is not just what I can see of course that informs my intending, I can also touch, smell, hear and taste as well as situate events in space and time. I can remember and anticipate as I explore my phenomenological way of knowing.

My dreams, my explorations in non-ordinary states through breathwork, and my memories are encounters with my world that, through phenomenology, are valid moments of my lifeworld. I find through my hermeneutic writings that I have a means of understanding moments as being parts of the whole. I move towards wholeness as my understanding becomes more whole as I delve into larger fields of our human cartography.

## **Our belief in the world as a whole**

Sokolowski shows me “Our shift into the phenomenological attitude is an ‘all or nothing’ move that disengages completely from the natural attitude and focuses, in a reflective way, on everything in the natural attitude, including the world belief” (2000 p.47). Our world belief, it seems, is pivotal to the world we experience and co-create.

Sokolowski warns us that our capacity for language allows us to speak abstractly and that we can refer to vision, for instance, without mentioning vision as being inseparable moments comprising the eye, the object and its background that are involved in the act of seeing. Language holds a similar distancing mechanism. Language allows us to describe a moment in isolation from its associated moments that comprise the occurrence of

vision, perception and movement. We tend to fall into the trap of regarding non-independent parts as being things that can be regarded separately from the contexts in which they arise. I am reminded that our tendency to separate pieces from the whole can become a trap for us. Pieces are distinguishable parts that cannot be separated from a whole—each piece participates in moments. Moments are filled with absences, presences, sides, faces and all manner of aspects that cannot help but be situated in a larger supporting field, our lifeworlds.

Caroline and my colleagues showed me how acutely aware they were of being treated like pieces, separate objects to be regarded from a distance. Caroline welcomed me as one who understood and showed respect. We acted together in community, in a spirit of relatedness and respect to one another and the beach-world. We, together, participated in a moment that stretched beyond a time/space continuum that, perhaps, we recognised as being a new understanding of reality (Bohm, 1980).

The distinction between pieces and moments is very important in philosophical analysis. What often happens in philosophy is that something that is a moment is taken to be a piece, taken to be separable from its wider whole and other parts; then an artificial philosophical “problem” arises about how the original whole can be reconstituted. The true solution to such a problem is not to fashion some new way of building up the whole out of such falsely segmented parts but simply to show that the part in question was a moment, not a piece, and that it never should have been separated from the whole in the first place. Many philosophical arguments are simply complicated attempts to show that something is a dependent, not an independent part, a moment and not a piece. (Sokolowski, 2000, p.24)

The important point that Sokolowski is making here for the intentionality of my thesis is his emphasis that parts and moments cannot separate from one another. A moment of pedagogy is not distinct from the whole situation in which it happens, the people to whom it happens and the evocation or inspiration for learning that it makes happen. Thus the pedagogic moment cannot be separated in its description from touch, tact and relatedness. Touch, tact and relatedness cannot stand apart from each other or from the whole of the pedagogic moment, as becomes evident in

my relating with my Aboriginal colleagues that is an important episode of learning revealed to me through my phenomenological reflection.

My dreams, breathwork experiences, encounters with colleagues, pedagogic realisations, classroom practice and facilitation are moments not pieces. The intendings of my lifeworld are embedded in a greater whole that cannot be separated and singled out. I am the knower who is presented with my world, who is inextricably a part of the world, *and* the knowing centre of my world. Our acts of perception, viewing, thinking and understanding are aspects of the forming activity of the mind, as Sokolowski (2000) states, when he reminds us that such acts are flows of non-independent moments.

Whenever we think about something, we articulate parts and wholes within it. The parts and wholes make up the content of what we think when we go beyond simple sensibility and rather mute perception. The naming of parts is the essence of thought, and it is important to see the difference between pieces and moments when we try, philosophically, to understand what understanding is. (Sokolowski, 2000, p. 27)

Phenomenology is a way of thinking that frees us from our Cartesian/Lockian dilemma. Whilst the naming of parts is the essence of thought, the essence of understanding is to understand the flow of moments that cannot be separated from the whole.

Monika Wikman, a Jungian scholar, talks of her “heart and mind and life opening with gratitude and awe to the mysteries and the map and the grace between us and the autonomous energies living in the psyche and psychoid beyond ordinary consciousness” (2004, p.xvii).

Wikman encourages us to cultivate a living relationship with the mysteries of the psyche and psychoid that depends on our ability to dim the light of the ego and attend to what appears, that “When we lose connection with the spirit in the core of all beings, our consciousness becomes one-sided, dry, and cut off from the natural sources of renewal in the psyche,” and that “This severance is a modern condition from which few are immune” (p.xix).

She suggests,

Our contact with the *numen* — the original spirit informing all life — can create bridges between the realms of existence...and the...‘crack between the worlds’ becomes a fruitful field of initiation where our human participation matters. Here, spirit, soul, and our consciousness work together as healing between the visible and the invisible worlds, between the known and the unknown, between spirit and matter, between heaven and earth, human and divine, conscious and unconscious fields of awareness and between all polarities. (Wikman, 2004, p.xix)

Are we to respond to Wikman’s invitation to redeem the severance caused by our modern condition by creating bridges between the realms of existence? My dreams, reflections, encounters with friends on the beach and breathwork journeys are devices for healing such severance. I create bridges and bring stories back from the wilds. My self-portrait is a portrait of a self-transformational journey.

Creating bridges between that which lies in the present and the absence is not for the faint-hearted warns Wikman. If we are seeking renewal in the realms of the psyche it requires our willingness to embark on an authentic relationship with darkness, and what we may describe as spiritual crises of identity, when we are almost inevitably going to encounter feelings of loss, emptiness, despair, or inability to continue living in ways in which we have become accustomed. We are invited, in a way that is similar to my dream invitation, to find an honest, humble way to discover this numinous source of renewal by dwelling with our community in the wilderness that our egos and habituated systems wish to push through at any cost.

Wikman tells us that our contact with mystery, unknowingness, and darkness is a key for us to develop our roots in the “erotic wilderness of the psyche”(2004, p.xx) that allows us connection with our original living spirit. And Sokolowski urges us to understand that “darkness conditions the possibility of light, and it also conditions the possibility of philosophy...philosophy must have the good sense to let the darkness be” (2000, p.168). Wikman returns us to the Sufi poet and mystic Jalal ad-Din Muhammad Rumi.

Rumi...speaks to the need for true connection, for a community, of specific souls with whom to travel so that we do not become lost in the desert. He



locates the caravan among those who 'have come before' pointing to the reality that our community of souls-those who can help constellate the meditations of the divine-is not contained within the limits of time and space...For this reality to be active in us, we must serve the unfolding development of the Self mysteries in our own lives. (2004, p.xxiv)

Tarnas invites us to consider viewing our world from a position of true connection, as does phenomenology. Rumi reminds us that true connection demands that we serve the unfolding development of the self-mysteries in our own lives. I long for this unfolding development in my own selfhood for the benefit of the self that Rumi refers to. Can I be humble, vulnerable, willing and open to listening and living deeply? Can my work in Holotropic breathwork become a Holotropic paradigm, a way of moving towards wholeness in the company of others, that informs the whole of my existence?

There is poem from Rumi that seems poignant as I come to the end of this chapter.

“What is the path?”

A self-sacrificing way,

But also a warrior's way, and not

For brittle, easily broken, glass bottle people.

The soul is tested here by sheer terror,

As a sieve sifts and separates

genuine from fake.

And this road is full of footprints!

Companions have come before.

They are your ladder.

Use them!

Without them you won't have the spirit-quickness

You need. Even a dumb donkey

Crossing a desert becomes nimble footed

with others of its kind.

Stay with a caravan. By yourself

You'll get a hundred times more tired

And fall behind.

Phenomenology, which too, is not for the faint-hearted, offers optimistic possibilities for renewal. Rumi suggests that our path is a self-sacrificing way, but one that we don't have to take alone. Wikman asks us to find the calling to our path inside our hearts.

The calling to our path can be answered only from inside our heart, our life and work, experienced and expressed in all we love and do. Work with the imagination, if we choose to participate, helps us individually answer the call and discover means toward cultivating the Philosopher's Stone—a living mystery capable of growing in the human soul. (2004, p.xxv)

My self-portrait is more of a sketch, a work in progress, a picture of sides, aspects and profiles of myself, where so much remains hidden behind the full-face profile I present for examination. My hope is that as I explore stories of my lifeworld as a teacher, facilitator, student, teacher-educator, and writer in the following chapters, the flow of non-independent pedagogic moments of my lifeworld may reveal themselves through the discipline of hermeneutics. May they encourage others to appreciate the intricacies and enormity of the matrix we call our world.

## CHAPTER 4

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### THE FLOW OF NON-INDEPENDENT MOMENTS OF PRESENCE

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#### **Presence: A never-ending story**

Can we describe presence? Can the telling of our stories and the sharing of our lives restore our relationship with the things that are ours? Can we find meaning and take refuge in the fullness of the time that it takes to develop relationship by “abiding in inquiry” (Seidel & Jardine, 2014, p.83), and relish in the in-between nature of what arises when tellers and listeners gather together? Can we act with pedagogic good if we are not present to our world?

Jardine tells us that the “key to abiding in inquiry is working in the *presence* of a topic and working to bring that topic to presence” (2014, p.85). Presence, he says, is not just “the present.”

It is a presence that forebodes or anticipates, that remembers and recalls and gathers, and it is experienced as having long since done so and as continuing to do so...The present, in the life of such work, is no longer simply a “now”...being present has a different meaning. (Seidel & Jardine, 2014, p.84)

We can develop “the sort of presence of mind that that which is fully present requires if it is to be thus present and if we are to have presence of mind about it” (p.85).

Presence, being present and having presence of mind are pedagogical moments I will explore through telling stories and discovering for myself the true locus of hermeneutics in the in-between as I create and weave texts for the listener.

“Something awakens,” says Gadamer, “when we summon the courage to tell our stories and speak them out loud to one another” (Gadamer 2001,

p.50). “Storytelling is linked up to the great arts of interpretation” (Seidel & Jardine, 2014, p.58).

It is the active and creative of weaving a text, a fabric (Latin *texus*) of experience and venture, between those gathered (tellers and listeners), the topographies of the story itself and those whose tale the story tells. “*The true locus of hermeneutics is this in-between*” (Gadamer, 1989, p.295). Stories are always, even in some small ways, the stories of those who have gathered in the light (one could say “radiance”) of the story being told. (Seidel & Jardine, 2014, p.58)

van Manen (2014) discusses Moustakas’ heuristic research that allows “the research participants to remain close to depictions of their experience, telling their stories with increasing understanding and insight” (Moustakas, 1994, p.19). Moustakas describes heuristic inquiry as a “transcendental phenomenological process that seeks to ‘illuminate’...a question or problem of importance and significance to the researcher” (p.19).

I tell my stories to shed light, to share, and to enter into dialogue between teller, listener and reader where the true locus of hermeneutics is this in-between. I become heuristic and hermeneutic through the telling and re-telling of stories. “This is how stories and their telling work — they are the open cast of path out into what is both familiar and, at the same time, yet to be known” (Seidel & Jardine, 2014, p.61). Stories “lend permission to us as tellers as well” (p.61).

I engage in a transcendental phenomenological process in seeking to illuminate and find meaning within the stories. What insights and understandings can I *bring home* to share with my community and myself?

I tell my stories by working in the presence of a topic to bring that topic to presence.

I sat in the front seat of our car. I looked with awe and wonder at the large road atlas open on my knee. I made the connections between the lines, blobs, numbers, names and shaded areas that emerged from the page with the roads, houses, woods, road signs and villages that sped past us as we drove along. My mother asked

where we had to go next. We were out together, on our own, just her and me. I was seven years old.

I hadn't ever remembered sitting in the front seat. Just her and me, no interruptions, no others. My mother chattered away to me, pointing, asking my opinion, showing me the symbols and talking lovingly about A roads, C roads, junctions, grey squares, buildings, trees, deciduous trees, conifers, farm entrances, field boundaries.

The map sprung into life before me. I followed eagerly, picking up on my mother's enthusiasm, eager myself to join in this game and tell her where we had to turn right or left, how long the road was ahead of us, how many more turns into A, B or C roads before we got to our destination. We were heading for Bradgate Park. We were having a picnic. Just us.

This was the day she took me to hospital. She left me there for a week. I was alone in hospital. I was separated from my family, as I had my first experience of operations, separation, and not knowing if I could go home. No one told me when I could go home.

As I write this, nearly five decades later, my mother comes and perches beside me and looks over my shoulder as we pore together over her old road map. We talk together about A roads, M roads, short cuts, busy streets, and towns that we knew, towns that neither of us know, pretty country roads and places where the traffic gets jammed. We share a history of moments of connection, intimacy, shared enthusiasm and love.

It was new for me to sit in the front seat of the car. My sister, brother, and I would be piled into the back seat of the car, occupying another world. We were the children, unrestrained and un-noticed, left to our own devices in the back seat.

Today was different. The large road atlas with its lines, blobs, numbers and shaded areas became a new language for me. This was the language I shared with my mother. What was her purpose in showing me the road atlas? Surely, she didn't need the help of a seven-year-old girl to find her way to the hospital?

What did my mother and I share that allowed space for me, a seven-year-old, to be so filled with awe and wonder? My mother was clearly engaged and engaging. She was interested in me and wanted my involvement as a navigator. She involved me in our journey. Did she too relish this private interaction as much as I did? Was she demonstrating her presence to me as we sped along in the car? Was her presence what brought my atlas to life for me? Was she showing me a pedagogical moment of being present that has led to my lifelong fascination with maps and terrain and the relationship between them? Was she demonstrating her relationship with me when she shared her love of navigation, and love for me? Did her love for me sustain me when I was then left alone to deal with the trauma of hospitals and separation? Has our love for each other and our shared love of map reading endured thanks to this shared experience?

Did my mother's enthusiasm help me to see the features so lovingly? Who and what was being loved? I felt the aliveness of my mother as she shared her love of maps, landscape and navigation with me.

What is it to be special? A common definition of special refers to belonging specifically to a particular person or place. I wonder how specialness influences relationship and learning? How does being special contribute to the pedagogical good as referred to by van Manen?

I had not yet asked myself *why* I was on my own with my mother? My child-like excitement was yet to be spoiled by knowing the true purpose of our journey together. I was really being taken to hospital where I would be left alone. My mother didn't tell me this. I was left wondering for a whole week as to whether I would see my family again.

My unexpected visit to hospital was preceded by my experience of intimate connection with my mother as she shared her enthusiasm with me, and for me. Maybe she used the opportunity to also demonstrate her commitment and skill in mothering and practicing pedagogical good.

A child has an experience of being alone, alone with her mother, and alone in hospital. What is special for a child to be alone with her mother? What opportunities present them when they are alone together? Was the

mother demonstrating her capacity for presence and paying good attention to her child? They shared a moment of specialness, solitude and intimacy.

It was common to send children to hospital on their own. It was common for a family to have one car and for the mother to be needed to care for the other children. It was most probable that my parents believed that I would be well cared for by the hospital staff. My parents were of a generation that were stoic and uncommunicative, in that they kept things back from their children. They were unlikely to realise the importance of telling me that I would be separated from them during my hospital stay.

James Robertson (1953) made the film *A Two-Year Old Goes to the Hospital* that highlights John Bowlby's (1969) work on attachment theory and illustrated a child's distress at being separated from her parents. Do I associate intimacy with separation and trauma? Are they interrelated and inextricably bound as a result of my experience? Could I have also become resilient as a result of this same experience? Have I developed empathy for others with similar early trauma of having been left?

I am reminded of the scene in Steven Spielberg's movie, *AI Artificial Intelligence* when the mother takes the artificially created boy to be returned to the place where he was made after her 'real' son recovers from a coma. The artificial boy is made to be hard-wired to love his mother. She no longer has time to care for the artificial boy and the 'real' boy is jealous of the one who took his place while he was in a coma. She begins by organising a picnic for him and the artificially created boy is excited to be having a picnic with just him and his mother. She, like my mother, did not reveal the purpose of the trip with the two of them until after the picnic. The boy is devastated and abandoned as she tries to get away from the distraught boy whom she leaves in the woods with only his teddy for company.

The mother in this scene has already agreed that she has to leave the boy but she demonstrates remorse at leaving him and in betraying him, particularly as he clearly loves and trusts her, believing that she can do him no harm.

The questions that both these stories evoke help me to remain attentive. The questions that come to me from my re-telling of these two stories suggest that I am remaining, as van Manen suggests on his website Phenomenology Online, “as attentive as possible to the ways that all of us experience the world and to the infinite variety of possible human experiences and possible explications of those experiences.” There, he too says, “phenomenological inquiry-writing is based on the idea that no text is ever perfect, no interpretation is ever complete, no explication of meaning is ever final, no insight is beyond challenge.” We can make experiential distinctions, or illuminate moments, that appear through the act of writing that he describes as “moments of seeking, entering, traversing, gazing, drawing and touching” (Phenomenology Online).

Thus we can describe moments of pedagogic relationship and presence in hermeneutic ways. Our moments of writing reveal our pedagogic moments, as we step back from the natural attitude, to find meaning. Are we encouraged through such processes to become more fully present?

### **Presence of longing and leadership**

I longed to be a Brownie, but I had to go on a waiting list. This just fed my longing. It took a year before I was ‘called up’. It was finally my turn to be a Brownie.

I remember my uniform with its plain brown tunic and triangular yellow material. It took effort, skill and determination to fashion that thing into a necktie. It was more fitting and useful for a soldier in the Boer War to wear a triangular tie than it ever would be for a ten-year-old girl in the Brownies — triangular neckties/bandages came in handy for stopping blood flow, bandaging wounds and immobilising broken limbs. Not much of that happened in our town. I loved my uniform, I loved learning how to tie the tie, and I loved being a Brownie.

I always had a passion for showing others what I had learned myself. It came naturally to share what I knew with my younger siblings. I found an intense desire to share the wonder of my world with them. I became a



mentor, teacher, and leader from a very early age. I wanted to play, explore and adventure with others. I was a natural leader.

My aptitude for leadership blossomed. My experience with the Brownies set me up as an explorer and adventurer. I was a patrol leader with the Girl Guides. We went camping, built bridges across rivers, and watched stars on cold autumn nights by smoky fires. I have kept the key to the cupboard we lovingly restored for our patrol gear. I am transported through my memories to the cold musty Guide hall. I fostered comradeship and trust in my Patrol. We learned together how to listen to the wildlife, watch weather patterns, and notice the creatures in the wild. We observed the differences in the seasons. We became self-sufficient, creative, inventive and resilient. I was in my element. I was living my passion. I found my passion for leadership. I loved building community and making connections. My passion has motivated me throughout my life and career as a teacher. The absent moments become present as I recall my early passion for leadership and connection through my writing and remembering.

As teachers, we do not only need to concentrate on how and what we teach, we need to discover and grow in our understanding of who we are when we teach. Palmer refers to the pain that permeates education as the pain of disconnection. He tells us,

Everywhere I go, I meet faculty who feel disconnected from their colleagues, from their students, and from their own hearts...Most of us go into teaching because of a passion to connect, but when institutional conditions create more combat than community, when the life of the mind alienates more than it connects, the heart goes out of things, and there is little left to sustain us. (1993, p.x)

I agree with Palmer that “beneath the broken surface of our lives there remains, in the words of Thomas Merton, “a hidden wholeness, it is the hope of so many wisdom traditions, we can be recalled to wholeness in the midst of our disconnected, torn and fragmented worlds and we can rediscover and rebuild community and our understanding of reality” (1993, p.x). My early passion to connect has sustained me throughout my life. Like Palmer, I have realised the importance of rediscovering our hidden wholeness through my journey towards understanding a reality that is

shown to us through our connections, our community and our profound sense of belonging to one another that transcends the pain of fragmented worlds (p.x).

### **Being pedagogic in ordinary life**

I have wanted to teach since I can remember. I wanted to teach cooking. I soon realised that cooking and food preparation, in the way it was taught to me at school, was not for me. It became the precision soulless art of following recipes. I was disenchanted by the “Mrs Beeton” style of food management designed for a busy housewife. My cookery teacher and I despaired of each other. I was too ‘free-range’ for her liking and training. Her teaching lacked soul as she retreated further into her procedures, cleanliness schedules and perfunctory and efficient menu planning.

My mother taught me to cook. She was poetic in the way she prepared food for our family. She was more of an alchemist than a cook. Near enough was good enough for my mother. She never weighed, measured or worried too much. Everything was cooked in the oven at Gas Mark 4. She churned out Sunday roasts, weekly sponge cakes, baked puddings, crunchy steamed vegetables and various unrecognisable things made with offal and bacon. I learned from her how to ‘wing it’ in the kitchen. She included me in everything she did in her alchemical kitchen storm. I spooned out flour, cut up butter, licked out the bowl, watched, listened, and chatted to her as she went about her business. I was learning without her having to teach me. I was her apprentice.

I wonder now why I was so keen to teach cooking? If it were knowledge and proficiency that I was seeking I would surely have been more enthralled by the science of the cookery I was being taught at school. No. What I was interested in was sharing my own wonder of learning and the poetry of creating that my mother had shared with me. She shared what she knew with artistic flair and acted with a confidence and rhythm that I found attractive. I wanted to emulate that way of being. I wanted to absorb, learn and pass on what I had learned from my mother when she embraced me in her lifeworld.

I was the youngest in the canoe club and I was to paddle a racing kayak. They are very fast and streamlined. The kayak barely had room for its occupant. It was so unstable and wobbly. I had to balance in this rocket of a kayak. It was impossible to balance the kayak when it was stationary. I had to get in and get moving in one seamless act, and then keep moving without hesitating or faltering, which resulted in inevitable capsizes. I was doing all my practice in our weed-infested canal. It was okay for those who had already mastered the art of paddling these kayaks that allowed no room for error but it was different for me.

My first attempt left me gasping for breath and spitting canal water and weeds as I was promptly dunked in the water. It took many attempts to get in, get moving, stay moving, get back, and get out before being dunked yet again. I got dunked over and over again.

I was enthralled, determined, engaged and I loved being coached. My teachers wanted me to succeed as much as I did. I was getting great feedback and encouragement. I was willing to learn and get cold and wet and muddy over and over again. I finally got it. At last I was able to get in tune with the fine balance required to paddle the kayak successfully. I had a kinaesthetic understanding of what to do. I could maintain a straight line, paddle fast, stay in balance, and in the kayak. It was like paddling an arrow through the water. The kayak and I were one. I was exhilarated and proud of my achievements. I was triumphant when, at last, I could clean the mud and weeds from my tired body and let the warm shower water wash over me, a good day done. I had learned perseverance, balance, determination and achievement.

My kayak instructors were club members, not formal teachers. How were they being pedagogic? The term 'club' is synonymous with pulling together, collaborating, joining forces or clubbing together for mutual benefit. My fellow club members reached out to me as a young inexperienced member, and together took time to share their kayaking gear and expertise to teach what they had already mastered. I was able to collaborate and join forces with them. I responded by bringing the whole of

myself to the task of learning how to paddle a racing kayak. In doing this, we were being mutually beneficial.

I raised a question in Chapter One as to whether pedagogy can be observed and experienced, and whether pedagogy is something we *are* rather than something we *do*. My mother and my kayak club members showed me that they could act sensitively, responsively and relationally. They demonstrated in those moments how to be pedagogic—that is, bringing touch, tact and relatedness together into our community of learners — for the good of those who stood with them in a pedagogic relationship. Where were the moments of pedagogic passion?

My mother taught me that the art of teaching is inextricably bound with the art of presence. She demonstrated this connection with presence and pedagogy during her chaotic, unbridled forays into her kitchen. She was being pedagogic in the way van Manen describes the ineffability of the way we share our lives with children as parents and teachers. Was my mother letting me into her world of passion for cooking? What did I know of where my cooking teacher was and who she was in that moment? Did her passion only lie in the technicalities of her subject? Who were the subjects who attended the class? Can subjects be separate from the school subject called Home Economics and can such separation constitute being pedagogic? Pedagogy as presence was there in my mother's kitchen and in her life where she invited me to join her as she got on with the job of feeding a family in the company of her young daughter.

My kayaking club members shared their passion and expertise with me. They let me have turn after turn in the kayak. They let me keep on going until finally I got it. They celebrated with me, encouraged me and stayed with me as I figured out for myself how I could balance, steer, paddle and stay upright in one seamless movement. They were present to me, and I was present to the task in hand. We were fully engaged and involved. Both of those experiences differed from the formal lessons in cookery and sport I “suffered” in school. What was I rejecting? Why I couldn't I be as passionate and involved?

As I was disaffected at school and myself became a teacher, I have always been willing to work with disengaged and disaffected students, and to ask, “Who am I as I teach?”

I constantly question my practice — who I am as a teacher, and how I come to know my students and they me. I wonder who is doing the teaching and who is learning when pedagogy is practised. I believe teaching and learning can be mutually exclusive, and can develop beyond the traditional model of school education in which teachers teach through imparting knowledge and students learn through soaking it up, if they can. I wonder about the ways teachers might engage in pedagogic relatedness. Can teacher and student being present with one another presence grow in their relatedness and thrive in a world where subject/object dichotomy prevails? There is no room for relatedness and tact if we teachers continue to objectify our students.

Phenomenology, self-inquiry, and Wikman’s invitation to create bridges between the realms of existence, as we said before, are not for the faint-hearted. Our striving for the pedagogic good calls me to be truthful, fearless, relational and tireless in my quest to understand myself as a pedagogic, relational, dialogic being — a dative of manifestation. The moments in the flow of pedagogical events in my life rebound in interdependence towards my life as a teacher.

### **Presence and selfhood, pedagogic moments**

We danced around each other for weeks as we established who we were to one another. They soon figured out that I was ‘their’ teacher, not yet another substitute or relief teacher. I was to be treated like a real teacher. They were polite and obliging, if a little resigned. Some flatly refused to remove their hats, jackets and forbidden items of clothing in class, as was expected by the school code of conduct. I duly entered into battle. I wished to portray myself as their teacher who maintains firm boundaries. I was showing them that I was no softie when it came to school rules.

Why did I choose dress code as my battleground? Was I hiding my own insecurities about my lack of institutionalisation? I did not really mind whether students wore hats in class, or whether or not they wore school uniform. There had been no school uniforms in my last school. Was I trying to make up for my perceived inadequacies? How could I be a ‘real’ teacher in the high school if I don’t care about uniform? How could I live up to my own expectations of being a good teacher? What better place to start than insisting on proper school dress code?

I had spent the summer studying, writing and discovering the delights of delving into the possibility that we belong to and participate in a universe that is ordered through an interconnecting cosmic field. I had been involved in sacred work, as Palmer describes, which points to an “ineffable immensity beyond concept and definition, that is the numinous energy at the heart of reality” (1998, p. 111). How had I ended up grappling with adolescents on the matter of whether or not they wear their baseball caps?

So, I was faced with the challenges of teaching adolescents and faced simultaneously with my pre-conceived beliefs about the stuff of ‘correct’ teaching. I had to examine my heart, return to my own writing and that of other educational adventurers to guide me and provide light to illuminate the dark recesses of my beliefs and conditioning.

At the beginning of the year my students were lack-lustre and did not seem to share my enthusiasm for learning borne out by their polite compliance and minor rebellion. There seemed to be a gaping chasm stretching between my own experiences of wonder that was being revealed through my studies and personal explorations, and what I witnessed as being the realities experienced by my students.

Palmer poses the question, “How can the teacher’s selfhood become a legitimate topic in education and in our public dialogues on educational reform” (1998, p.3)? His work and research points to a correlation between reclaiming and honouring teachers’ selfhood, improved success for students, and a revitalisation of education systems. Palmer invites educators to reclaim their wholeness and strive for a renewal of our spirits in the belief

that “good teaching flows from the identity and integrity of the teacher” (1998, p.10).

An important turning point came for me in a most profound way during the course of an ordinary day at school during an ordinary encounter with people in my class.

I had attended a series of Buddhist teachings. I was asked to embark on an exercise designed to help me to practice reclaiming my wholeness. The exercise involved firstly contemplating all the interconnected events, hopes, aspirations, happenings and universal strivings that have contributed to the arising of who I am at that moment. These were the questions that were asked of me. What decisions and actions have been made by countless sentient beings? What universal physical, social, emotional, micro and macro phenomena had occurred to allow me to exist in the way that I am at any given moment? What miracles have taken place for my knowing to be developed at any given point in my journey? Is there ever a time when I am alone or in stasis? Is there ever a time when I am entirely of my own making? How have I contributed to the lives of others as they contribute to mine? It is impossible to quantify who and what has contributed to my being and knowing? I can only imagine the intricacy and enormity of the web of life that unfolds to support my unfolding. I can only wonder that I am involved as an agent, participant and recipient and that I am in a constant state of flux and development.

The next part of the exercise was to choose someone and to apply the same process to them, asking myself who and what has contributed to that person’s knowing and being in that moment?

The following day I met with my class of reluctant mathematicians and began my daily ritual of attempting to rid the students of their illegal apparel. I was mostly successful that day as they were starting to get the message that I wasn’t a softie. There was one student who resisted complying with anything. I put on the pressure. I took a seat next to him and encouraged him to pay

attention to the task in hand. I tried to get him to attempt the maths task before him, and, of course, take off his hat.

I was acting as a model high school teacher and I was not going to be thwarted by this young person who had other ideas.

It was at this moment that I remembered my exercise of the previous evening. Time appeared to stand still as I first began to contemplate the miracle of the web of life that was contributing to who I was at that moment. I became aware of all the myths and beliefs about what I thought it took to be a good teacher. I turned my attention to the young man next to me and applied a similar principle to his life. I allowed myself to be curious about all the phenomena that had contributed to who he was at that moment. It was just a moment in real time and no words were exchanged. I felt awe and gratitude that I was privy to the complexity of life that was present in the person next to me. I was astounded at the infinite possibility for us to mutually shape and be shaped by one another. I realised that that process had already begun.

I transformed in an instant and changed from acting like my idealised version of being a teacher to witnessing my own transformation and humility. I was sure that my rebellious student picked up on my changed energy. Our eyes met and I felt a shift in his energy towards me. Were we both at that moment seeing each other in a new way? I could tell from his expression that something had changed in his attitude. Could he tell that I was genuinely curious and interested in him? Had I relinquished my guard to reveal myself to my students more fully? Was I willing to reveal myself in my incompleteness rather than taking on the mantle of the 'expert' and the one who set the tasks and set the rules? Was I willing to engage in a co-creative process that belonged to both teacher and students? Could I become a leader and a teacher that could also be a learner? Were my students and I both teachers and learners in this more complex relationship? I realised at that moment that I was learning to reveal my more authentic self. I did not have to compromise my authority or



relinquish the responsibility necessary for being a teacher. Rather, I was inviting an exchange based on mutual trust and respect.

The student next to me quietly removed his baseball cap and placed it next to him as we worked together to figure out the maths problems he was grappling with. The class appeared to change at that moment and settled in to working calmly and attentively for the duration of the lesson. Had they taken their lead from the class rebel and settled when he settled? Had they taken their lead from me as I too had changed my focus away from being dominating to being participative? Had they picked up on the changed field between us?

I am heartened by Palmer's work as I discover his emphasis on the importance of teachers' identity, integrity, sense of belonging, and courage to embark on an adventure of teaching that calls for an integral state of being. Palmer (1998) explores the significance of "the inner landscape of the teaching self" (p.5), stressing the importance of intellectual, emotional and spiritual integrity that depend on one another for wholeness. "The more familiar we are with our inner terrain, the more surefooted our teaching, and living, becomes" (p.5). Palmer maintains, "At every level of education, the selfhood of the teacher is the key" (p.5). My assumptions relating to 'correct' teaching is centred on a 'what' and 'how' and 'why' approach based on my entrenched beliefs about how to be a successful teacher where we acquire more tools and strategies to add to our already burgeoning collection.

My intention to make a difference to students' lives calls me to develop and express my selfhood. How does my selfhood make their education meaningful and successful? Can journeys of self-transformation and our inquiry into what comprises self support our selfhood as teachers?

Many critics have noted the growing disrespect inherent in our social relations and the sad implications of such incivility for the future of democracy. But fewer have noticed our growing disrespect for the "grace of great things" and its sad implications for the future of teaching and learning and the life of the mind. In a culture of disrespect, education suffers the worst possible fate-it becomes banal. When nothing is sacred, deemed worthy of respect, banality is

the best we can do. What could be more banal than to stand in the midst of this astonishing universe, sifting its wonders through reductionist screens, debunking amazement with data and logic, downsizing mystery to the scale of our own minds? (Palmer, 1998, p.111)

I did not want to abandon my sense of the sacred to conform to institutional expectations. How could I deal with my internal dialogue that judged me for not being a ‘real’ teacher? Do real teachers conform to institutional expectations?

With Palmer (1998), I ask of myself who is the self that teaches? I allow for space in my heart to let my educational inquiry examine my selfhood. I embark on a trail in search of educational reform and an examination of what comprises good teaching. Can we, as Palmer suggests, address such issues openly and honestly, alone and together in order to serve our students more faithfully and enhance our own wellbeing? As I teach, I project the condition of my soul onto those around me and onto to our very way of being together. Palmer suggests that if the teaching experience is viewed from such an angle our teaching holds a mirror to the soul and that self-knowledge is the key to knowing our students and subject matter and “that we teach who we are” (1998, p.2).

### **I am the dance, said she.**

I asked Maria whether she needed any support from us, the facilitators, as she prepared for her journey. She reported that she was used to doing this kind of (breathwork) journey work and that sometimes she would appreciate some touch from one of the facilitators if she moved around during her session. She asked for touch that would match and follow her own movements. She told us what kind of intervention would provide support to her. I wondered how I would know if and when to make the decision to reach out and touch her if and when she began doing her own movements. I told her as much and said that we rarely intervened unless someone was in distress, or was about to get hurt. She assured me that it would be fine to support her in the way she had asked and she assured me that she would probably benefit from

the presence of another as she went deeper into her journey in an enhanced state of awareness.

The breathwork session was well into its second hour. Maria began moving rhythmically, holding, stroking and rubbing the back of her head. Was this the time to offer her support? Most people ask for support in this practice and we are trained to basically keep out of people's way, trusting that they are the ones to orchestrate their own journey. We are primarily there to be responsive and be present, so that participants can trust their own process.

I moved gently into the space next to her and sat down close to her. I was acutely aware that she may be very sensitive to her immediate environment and would notice if anyone had come too close.

What was I to do next, if anything? I was hesitant. I didn't want to enter her field any further, risking the possibility of interfering or unnecessarily contaminating her experience through my clumsy intervention. I sat with her as she continued to hold her head and move it from side to side with increasing energy.

Finally, she reached out, took my hands, and put them under hers as she cradled her head. She removed her hands from her head and put them on top of mine. She was holding my hands as I was now cradling her head and moving with her, following her movements.

We remained like this for some time. I responded to her movements. I became fully involved in the process of matching and supporting her as she continued her dance-like movements. I too began my own dance-like movements in response to hers. I was no longer thinking about what I should and shouldn't be doing. I became fully involved as both a participant and a facilitator of her journey.

I wasn't thinking any longer about how I may be a facilitator. I was already satisfied that whatever role I was playing was endorsed by her. Maria was the one orchestrating the dance and she was the

expert in her own process. I was invited to be a co-participant, co-traveller and companion on her journey.

I felt myself relax into my role as a participant in our co-journey. I was acutely attuned to her movements and body language. My training in being present to someone's experience allowed a vast space for my own experience to emerge. The music, our reciprocal movements, and the energy in the entire room moved me. I witnessed my capacity to be fully involved in the process of presence to another. I was present to myself.

I was touched and moved by Maria's process as she was touched and moved by my facilitation. We were present to each other, to the situation and to the participatory responsive nature of the moment that we shared together.

How would it be to apply the principles of presence that I learned as a breathwork facilitator to my practice as a classroom teacher? What would it look like to be present to the students in that situation? What would it be to be present to myself? How would our experiences of being teacher and student be affected by the conscious and deliberate act of practising presence?

In what ways does presence manifest in the pedagogic good? Is pedagogy good when we are not present, as when I was more concerned with uniform than relating to my students in a responsive and sensitive way? Does our capacity to explore, identify, practice and describe presence improve our practice as educators?

Supposing I applied the principles described in my story with Maria to a classroom situation. I would ask my students what kind of support they might need. I would listen to their response. I would respect and recognise their experience as travellers in their own journeys. I would recognise that they know the territory. I would trust their capacity to describe what they expect they might do, what they might experience, and what intervention they might need. They would articulate self-knowledge. I would be responsive to them. I would resist relying on formulaic responses based on my habituated ways. I would listen carefully to my students and trust that

they know about themselves. I would 'rarely intervene' unless invited to or if someone was in distress, or about to hurt themselves. Like Maria, my students could most likely benefit from the presence of another so that they can go deeper into their journeys of discovery and self-discovery. Could my practice be improved by committing to staying present to my students as they enter their own uncharted territory? Am I called to trust my students to navigate such territory? Good pedagogy would have to have trust between student and teacher as part of its quality. van Manen refers to the ineffability of good pedagogy (1990). Are we called to let go of the shores of predictability and control and turn towards our students with confidence and trust?

I knew that with Maria I could trust that she was the one to orchestrate her own journey. Can I become open to trust my students? How would it be if we behaved, acted and developed dispositions towards our students of any age as if they were the experts in their own learning? How would it be if I acted as though the students were the ones with their own wisdom and internal mechanisms for growth and unfolding? I would be thrust into a new realm of understanding about relatedness. Can I learn from the experience in relatedness with my Aboriginal colleagues on the beach to practice a similar way of being and presence with my students?

I was acutely aware of the effect of my nearness to Maria. Am I similarly aware of the effect of space and proximity as I share the classroom with my students? I moved gently and with respect in the session room with Maria. How do I move and engage with students in my classroom? Can I apply the same principle of sensitivity to learners in my care? I have learned to be present to people so that they trust themselves to let go and journey into their own non-ordinary states. Can I be just as present to my students? I strive to hold a similar supportive space in all aspects of classroom practice. Can we practice presence and pedagogic good in our everyday lives as teachers?

When I was working with Maria I questioned myself. What was I to do next? Was my hesitance part of being present? My hesitance sprung from my reluctance to interfere and be contaminating and clumsy. My hesitance allowed time for reflection to examine my own actions. My hesitance

allowed me to listen to Maria. Is there a place for hesitance in good pedagogy? Can I learn to listen carefully and sensitively to my students lest I become interfering, contaminating and clumsy with my intervention?

When I did reach out, Maria responded and invited me into the ‘dance’ of her own movements. The invitation to be fully involved in another’s dance as they take the lead in their own journey is a powerful metaphor for me. I relish the invitation to become fully involved in the learning journey of another and remember my passion to teach and be connected in my early life. When I am present I am no longer self-conscious about being a teacher or facilitator. I am invited to fully participate, in all pedagogic situations, as a co-participant, co-traveller and companion. I am invited to relax into my role. The participatory nature of our co-journey allows a vast space to open up within me. In the flow of pedagogic events, I practise presence for the pedagogic good.

### **Presence, allowing things to be themselves**

Palmer (1993) recognises that “The spiritual person comes to view the world in a different perspective, underneath ordinary reality he or she recognizes another dimension” (p.120). It follows from this knowledge that the pedagogic person allows their students to be themselves. Palmer says, “At the very core of each creature, the contemplative finds an otherness that compels him to allow it to be itself and to abstain from the conquering, objectifying attitude we commonly adopt” (p.120). We allow reality to reveal itself in the act of allowing others to be. Have we, as Palmer points out, “hidden ourselves behind the barriers of impersonal knowledge because we do not want to be found out” (p.121)? Do we “seek objectified knowledge in order to know without being known” (p. 121)?

### **Feeling, suspending and opening**

Ann made her final presentation. I was a facilitator and leader. I was to listen, support, and be present to the participants as each told their story. Many of the stories had moved me deeply. I was surprised by Ann’s story and was caught unawares by my strong

response to it. I had not expected the powerful wave of emotion I felt. Ann showed us symbols and artifacts to illustrate her presentation. They were beautiful. She told us about her village school as a child and how much she enjoyed and valued the festivals. She talked of being absorbed by the rituals of the May Day Festival and how she identified with them. She told of her fascination and involvement in the pagan dances and symbolism that was woven into her school and village life. She told us about dancing the ancient traditional dances as a young girl. She felt that in the dancing, she was transported to an earlier time in English history. She identified strongly with the people of a past era.

Ann stopped telling her story partway through the telling. Her body began to shake, her breathing changed and she was incapable of speaking. She went into a trance-like state. Her story continued as body movements and utterances. She was deeply involved in a kinaesthetic experience. She was talking about her experiences in non-ordinary states of consciousness and, in the telling, her storytelling became trance-like. I was very involved as a listener. I was more deeply moved the deeper she got involved in her own story. It was like witnessing a dance, a re-enactment, or an embodied enactment. I became so involved in her story that I wept. It was a quiet controlled kind of weeping. I hoped others did not notice me.

Why should I worry that others noticed me weep? What triggered my weeping? What happens for me when I control my weeping?

A transitive verb definition 'to weep' is to pour forth, to exude, to express passion or to express deep sorrow.

My understanding of my role as a facilitator is to witness other people's processes but to remain separate from the process that 'belongs' to another. It is Ann's story and experience. I am responsible to Ann and the other participants to maintain attention and ensure the welfare of the storyteller as well as other participants as they witness the story. This model does not permit me to have an emotional response myself. Sam Kaner's definition of

a facilitator is one that “Supports everyone to do their best thinking and practice. The facilitator encourages full participation, promotes mutual understanding and cultivates shared responsibility” (2008, p.32).

Would I encourage full participation, promote understanding and cultivate shared responsibility by remaining detached and separate from Ann’s process? I now realise that as I allowed myself to weep I was fully experiencing Ann’s presentation as a listener, witness and participant. I was intending the experience as a dative of manifestation. I was pouring forth, expressing passion and expressing deep sorrow. I was affected by her story.

As I stand back from the text, and the experience of first witnessing, then remembering and writing about the incident, I suspend judgment and analyse the text and adopt a phenomenological attitude. Ann’s childhood experience is being presented to both her and I through her remembering and telling of her story. Her account of the May Day Festival is brought forth as an identity in manifolds. The festival is real. It exists as an original event as it appeared to Ann when she was a child. It exists in its historical roots as part of England’s pagan practices. It exists as a story of a remembered event and it exists as it is told to me. I am presented with the identity in manifold of the festival in its absence, presence, wholes and moments. I am presented with Ann as she is affected by her own memories and body experiences, and as she brings forth and makes conscious, her deeper, more hidden levels of experience. I am presented with my recollection of the May Day Festival, in its absences and presences, as a moment that I shared with Ann.

I, like Ann, grew up in England. I remember the pagan festivals where people danced in colourful costumes. I played the fiddle for the Morris dancers. I can hear now the clack of their metal tipped shoes as they strike the cobbles. I have known Ann for many years, we are friends and we have worked together and alongside each other. We have supported each other in non-ordinary states. We have ventured far into our lived experiences through our imaginings, dreams, memories and stories. My response to Ann and her story was a profound experience for me. I am connected to Ann through our shared experiences and our respect and care for one another. I am impressed with the ease with which Ann enters her trance world. I



remember powerful experiences of my own, as I am a witness to hers. As Ann brought her experience to consciousness in the public arena, I too was presented with and became conscious through my witnessing and remembering, the presence and absence of the phenomena as a co-creative experience.

I did not expect to weep the day I listened to Ann's story. I wept because I was moved. I was moved more deeply than I supposed I was allowed to. My understanding of my role as a facilitator was that I was to remain apart, to be unaffected, to be available as a support in the way a first aid officer is available at a sporting event. Kaner describes a facilitator as one who encourages full participation, promotes mutual understanding and cultivates shared responsibility. Staying apart from the process and standing back does not seem to come into it. Have I already trapped myself through my belief that I need to remain apart and detached? We are to cultivate shared responsibility. Does that then allow me to reveal to myself and to others that I am changed by witnessing a participant's story? I cannot be separate or detached.

My work with Holotropic breathwork, both as participant and facilitator, helps develop my selfhood. My work as a phenomenologist helps me realise myself, the self who is "the centre of disclosure to whom the world and everything in it manifest themselves" (Sokolowski, 2000, p.112).

I become an "agent of truth" (Sokolowski, 2008, p.1). I become responsible for the judgments and verifications that I come to value, and for myself, as the perceptual and cognitive owner of my world. Phenomenology allows me to adopt a philosophical transcendental position to make meaning. If I am to distil what I have been learning, I recognise myself as being empirically part of my lifeworld and at the same time I enjoy my human capacity for language and reason that allows me to have the world presented to me. If I am correlated with the world as a participant, who cannot be separated from it, and as an agent, or dative, to whom the world has been given, tact, touch and relatedness become essential in my pedagogic agency. If I were to act without touch, tact and relatedness, I would not be acting with pedagogic agency.

Ann's story is also my story. I facilitated her telling and she facilitated my listening. We were sharing a moment together that demanded my full participation, involvement, response and engagement. The true locus of hermeneutics is this in-between. For me to be present to another, I need to be present to myself. What is it like to be present to myself?

I am aware of my body, I feel in balance as much as I can. My body carries me comfortably and I am moving with ease. I can feel elements of my body cooperating with each other. I am aware of my breathing, but not overly concerned about it. I imagine a dancer, who is in tune with themselves and the dance. The body and the dance are one — indivisible. The dancer is the dance as the dance is the dancer — inseparable. Body, dance and dancer flow as one and altogether the same. There is spaciousness within and around my body. I am aware of the larger field around me. I am well prepared. I have paid attention to the setting. Many practitioners know the importance of good preparation and attention to detail in creating a beautiful and functional setting in which to operate.

I suspend my own needs and my own internal chatter. To be present to another I orient myself towards the other and maintain a full realisation of myself in the situation. I bring the whole of me within the whole situation to be wholly present. I release my need for effort and thinking. I am supported by a much larger part of myself. I am in tune with everything around me. Everything is the entire universal force and divine principle. I am being held and I am holding. I am deeply involved and my heart is open, open and oriented towards other. I am witness without judgement. I am present with deep curiosity. I have set free my preconceived ideas. It is safe here. How am I to know when I am present? Am I to reflect on my experience after the event? Am I to ask for feedback from others? Are they to tell me?

Tav Sparks, my friend and teacher is the director of *Grof Transpersonal Training*, the leading organisation that teaches Holotropic breathwork facilitators. He shares what he knows about facilitator presence with his staff. Sparks draws on years of teaching, observing others and being a facilitator himself to draw attention to the ineffability of facilitator presence, as van Manen talks of the ineffability of pedagogy. We cannot learn from

texts and instructions. But we can know how to hold when we have experienced being held by another. We can learn to be present. Presence is something we enact, and something we can be. Like pedagogy, is it a state of being that emerges when we commit to being sensitive, responsive, available and ‘fully there’ for another? I attempt to describe what it feels like from within to be present to another. I believe that what has to be present and vital, once again, is touch, tact and relatedness.

I am calm. It is difficult to describe — I am not complacent. It is the kind of calmness when I rest in the eddy. The water of the eddy swirls around and holds me in a stable position. I can rest. Facilitator presence has the quality of calmness amongst turbulence. I am alert and watchful. I am not alone. I am part of a team. I feel at home. I too am being held. I draw on the strength that is available to me as I focus my interest, attention and energy on the needs and wellbeing of another. I am fully awake. I am doing, and yet, I am not doing.

My stories reveal to me a flow of non-independent moments of pedagogic presence. The non-independent moments appearing through this chapter show an underlying connectedness and interdependence that lies in relationship and exist in our encounters with our pedagogic lifeworld. I learn to be anticipatory, rather than predictive, in opening to ways of being pedagogic.

## CHAPTER 5

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### INCLUSION: WRAPPING AROUND AND EMBRACING

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Buber's work draw's my attention to inclusion as a means for us to transform from our isolated ego-centred notion of self towards selfhood that revolves around I/Thou relatedness. Is Buber suggesting that we cannot separate when we are called to be a related being? Can we, as he might suggest, release ourselves from separateness and learn to touch and be touched by one another's lives when we allow our lives, and ways of knowing and being, to become acts of wrapping around and embracing?

#### **Being held, being touched**

How do we understand, experience and practise "inclusion" as described by Buber? For me, Buber's notion of inclusion is at the core of the teacher-student relationship. Interpreting Buber, Kenneth Kramer writes, "This type of inclusion - which literally means wrapping around and embracing - involves experiencing through the student's eyes and ears...the teacher comes in person to meet and to draw forth the student in new ways" (Kramer, 2013, Loc 47). In this chapter I describe my own experience of literally being held as I was held as a student in a teacher-student encounter during my Holotropic breathwork practice. Then I turn to my experience as a teacher as I examine my teaching practice in light of my understanding of inclusion, dialogical relationship, trust and tact.

I was accustomed to being a facilitator at breathwork retreats. My job was to prepare the setting for others to do their work. I had learned to support participants with practice and confidence.

I felt lost when it was my turn to be a participant. I immediately noticed the beautifully prepared room, the flowers, cushions, wall

hangings and a huge circle of chairs. The room was all ready for our introductory session. It was so often my job to do the preparation. The roles were reversed and I was uncomfortable. I was there to do my own exploratory work and others were there to support me.

It was my turn to breathe. I tried to relax as much as I could. I felt nervous and a little fearful. I thought just then how much easier it was to facilitate and watch over someone else than it was to be the one to be supported and cared for by others.

My nervousness gave way to appreciation as it dawned on me that these people supporting me really cared. These were my friends, people I had met at similar venues all over the world. This time it was my turn. It had been such a long time since I had done my own work. Some of these people were my colleagues. We had worked together as co-facilitators at many events and in many places. They paid particular attention to me at this big workshop where there were many people who also needed their attention. I felt loved and welcomed by them. Fiona, my friend and colleague approached me and encouraged me to make the most of this opportunity to do my own journeywork. She reminded me how much I had done for others and that it was my turn to be supported.

Fiona was willing to take on the role of witness for me. She was prepared to be present as a facilitator. Avraham Cohen and Heesoon Bai (2008) discuss the Buddhist and Daoist perspectives of the counsellor/facilitator as companion and remind us of our need, in order to heal, for two-fold connection — intra-subjective connection to self and inter-subjective connection to others. Our healing facilitates our returning to a conscious connection with self and other — a return to conscious I/Thou relatedness.

It is unusual, but this time she asked if I was willing to ask for help at the beginning of the session. She said that if I was ready, and if it felt right, to agree to be held by her right from the beginning of the session. It is unusual because we generally begin without

intervention. The understanding is that we as breathers can enter into the experience of non-ordinary states work more fully if we are on our own at the start of the session. This was not usual however.

I had come to this retreat as a participant having been moved deeply by other people's courageous journeys. I was ready to embark on a deeper journey of self-discovery, to be vulnerable, and to embark on a process of surrender. Eventually I made an agreement that I would experiment with being held as I breathed and entered into an enhanced state of awareness.

I could hear the music begin and I started to breathe deeply and continuously as I left behind the concerns of my everyday world and entered a more meditative state. Fiona was nearby. I reached out, indicating that I was ready to be held. My whole body resisted. I was caught between wanting to cooperate and wanting to resist. I was so fearful of exploring in this way. What was going to emerge for me? What would happen if I really let go? What would happen if I let myself be held? Why was it so hard to do this? What was I resisting?

Cohen and Bai (2008) describe being “spiritual” as meaning “certain altered states of consciousness and a sense of connection characterised by a sense of non-duality between the perceiver and the perceived, subject and object. Such non-dual states can be achieved through practices in breath (*spiritus*) work” (p.46). The breathwork itself helps practitioners to achieve a sense of non-duality. Do our habituated ways of regarding ourselves as being separate — our suffering — cause us so much distress that it is not a surprise that I would resist and fear encountering my pain of loss and disconnection?

I knew that my resistance was deep seated and possibly belonged to a much earlier time in my life experience. I did not think about any specific occasion as I felt rage and confusion. I wanted to be held. Not so much the ‘I’ of the present moment, the ‘I’ in that current time and space that I occupied as an adult. This was an ‘I’

that I had always known, a deep recognition of me with an historic sense of identity. I stiffened into a pose of self-protection and wept. I wept uncontrollably without trying to control or stop my weeping. I was aware of both my resistance and my yearning to be held. I feared that if I did not resist I would open up to levels of yearning I did not dare to feel. My body contracted into a tight ball. I felt as though every part of me was defended against daring to admit to myself that I needed help and support. I continued to weep, to contract and to hold myself in a rigid position. I could still hear the music. Nobody was pushing me or encouraging me or making me do anything. This was my own process and my own internal battle. I was aware of the layers of support that was around me and I was aware that I was too scared to reach out and receive that support. I was too scared in case I had been holding myself at arms length for longer than I realised. What would happen if I let down my guard? What was I protecting myself from by holding at arms length? I continued my battle with myself and coughed, spluttered, cried and writhed around whilst maintaining my defended position of being curled into a tight ball.

I am not sure what changed. Maybe it was the cathartic act of weeping and holding myself so tightly in a defended position. Maybe it was the act of entering into a non-ordinary state of awareness. Maybe it was a combination of all the acts and actions that allowed me to shift. I felt a shift. I felt my resistance lessen and I made tentative moves to reach out, to hold and be held. I began to allow myself to soften and open to the mutual act of holding and to let myself be held. Maybe it was also the power of the music that supported the shift in my awareness. I had heard the tracks of music on many previous occasions. I was very familiar with the succession of tracks that were played that day. It was different today. I became aware of a profound sense of sacredness. The music with its rhythm and evocative melody seemed to pervade my whole being. I could feel myself opening to a vast field of being held. I felt as though I was being held and

supported by a vast matrix of phenomena, the way that some have described an encounter with their god. I did not have a description but I had a profound experience of participating in a great intelligence. I opened in my mind, body and spirit. Time seemed to slow down.

My usual concept of time was challenged as I became aware of the fullness of each moment. My awareness was greatly enhanced. I could hear each note of the music, not as an isolated event but as if I was totally absorbed in the making, playing, listening and participating in each musical event, as if I *was* the music. I was at the same time involved in the experience of holding and being held by another. I was intensely involved in a multi-faceted experience that was like being 'held' by the entire universe. It was much more than a notion of being held. I felt at that moment as though I knew what it was to be completely embraced.

My experience of slow motion reminded me of times when I was a young rock climber. Just once in a while, when climbing a particularly difficult section I would be so absorbed in the action of balance and movement up and across the rock landscape that I felt myself slip into another dimension. I became acutely aware of my self being completely involved and present to the action of climbing. I was embraced by everything around me. My usual senses and concerns gave way to being part of a dance that I was engaged in with my rocky environment. I was both absorbed in the action of climbing and simultaneously observing myself being the climber. I was in a state of heightened awareness and involvement. Both my experiences were like being 'in the zone'. Long distance runners, dancers, musicians and writers have reported being in such enhanced states when they take their practice to advanced levels of involvement.

As I was being held, I felt the loss of not being held. I felt a deep dark cavern of grief and fear that reached far back as long as I had known. I felt as if I had entered a chasm of longing and loss that permeated my whole being. What had I uncovered and revealed to myself about my longing and early, unmet needs?



The fullness of my experience of being held during my breath session contrasted starkly with my experience as a newborn child. Empty, gaping loss. Of not being held. Of not being touched. Of being separated. Of being abandoned. I felt it all as I re-experienced and remembered, and re-enacted my very early post-birth experiences. My heightened awareness revealed to me what I already knew and what my body had always known. I was re-living, remembering and experiencing its fullness for the first time in its manifestation of presences and absences that again reminds us of the complex nature of time and presence.

It was a shock for me to be born. My sensitive young being felt my mother's ambivalence. She said all along that she was not a tactile person. I found her to be awkward and hesitant at any prospect of holding or affectionate touch. I was born when babies in western traditions were separated from their mothers and taken to another room soon after birth. We were put in cots and pinned down with tightly fitting bedding. There were so many babies born in our hospital that day that there were no cots left. They found a drawer for me at the far end of the hospital. My mother and I were a long way apart that day.

Josephine Anderson (in Grabe, 1986) advocates holding therapy for the unattached child. Those of us who experienced neglect or profound loss as a very young child develop compensatory self-parenting tendencies, she explains. In one of her case studies she describes her experience with Bob. All other therapy had failed with Bob. By the age of seven he had developed an armoury of self-protective behaviours to compensate for the neglect he had incurred in his young life.

After about three months I began therapeutic holding...Most of the first three sessions had to do with fear and anger...The fourth session started as usual... He wailed...The wailing changed to sobbing. Bob cried profoundly for ten minutes while I rocked him and commiserated. (p.93)

In Anderson's case study, Bob remembered things about his early life and the loss of his mother that he had not been able to recall before the holding sessions. He 'regressed' to his baby state and allowed himself to be held. His teachers reported that he became cooperative, calm and was able

to share with other children. He was held and was able to renew his trust in others to the extent that he no longer needed to protect and self-parent.

He, like me was able to fully re-live early trauma and allow himself to be fearful, angry and resistant until he could let someone he trusted hold him in a therapeutic way. Bob was not forced into being held. Anderson understood the importance of children in her therapy, exercising choice and agency. She stresses that in holding therapy, “The child needs to relive the abuse/neglect/separation experience and have it come out differently” (Anderson in Grabe, 1986, p. 93). I re-lived feelings of separation and abandonment and it “came out differently” in my breathwork experience. I could trust enough to be held when I was in a regressed state myself. I learned first-hand the importance for some of us to experience therapeutic holding in a safe set and setting.

I had let my mother off the hook. I had no idea that I had harboured expectations about how she should have behaved towards me at birth and throughout my childhood. I went to stay with my mother soon after the workshop. To my surprise she responded affectionately to my embrace. She let me hug her fully and responsively. She hugged me. I had said nothing to her about my session. I wonder what had changed between us? Had I been holding her at bay without realising it? Had I, like Bob and so many wounded and abandoned children, decided to self-parent? How had my early trauma affected how I relate to others? How does my self-discovery in non-ordinary states affect my self-knowing?

### **Pedagogy of trust**

Do I trust more readily? Can I empathise with others who are also traumatised? Kramer reminds us that, “If the beginning of dialogue involves turning toward the other, “turning” itself is made possible by trusting” (Kramer, 2013, Loc 1419). How does my experience of being held affect how I pay attention to my students? Can we hold our students’ attention? Can we hold space for them?

How do we establish trust? Kramer’s understanding of trust from Buber’s lens points to a “Willingness to live from moment to moment and

to live what each new moment brings, accepting that a genuine relationship is two-sided and beyond the control of our will, having the courage to address and the courage to respond, and, openness and willingness to listen to the other” (Kramer, 2013, Loc 1419). I had tasted all these elements that led to my ability to trust. I had trusted and been trusted. My facilitator and I had turned towards one another in an attitude of dialogue.

### **Pedagogy of tact, entering into dialogue and pedagogic relationship in the classroom**

I was Jonathan’s teacher. He was a noisy and disruptive bright student with little interest in formal education. I had attempted to offer formal education to Jonathan’s large class. The group of 32 of us were crammed into a small classroom flanked on two sides by wall-to-ceiling glass partitions that joined other classrooms with little privacy or space. Jonathan moved around as he pleased. He spoke to whomever he pleased about anything he wished to. He was charismatic and confident and drew others into his sphere, and away from mine. I battled on to persuade the class to maintain focus on what I thought was relevant and important.

I was embarrassed that Jonathan could attract attention and that his actions so easily influenced the rest of the class. They were way more interested in his agenda than mine. We were on show to two other classes and I had ideas about how we should appear to others. I wanted a calm and compliant class, not the noisy, disrupted, boisterous one that I had. Jonathan’s behaviour was of concern to me. He challenged my ideas about how I could teach him and his class. I had to deal with Jonathan, so that he was no longer a problem, or, I had to change the way I taught and, in so doing, I had to change myself.

Formal, positivistic education meant sticking to the textbooks, curriculum expectations, and focussing exclusively on grades and outcomes. How was I to deal with Jonathan, who had other ideas? Jardine warns us that, “Something deathly happens to living disciplines of knowledge when they are rendered into simply decomposable objects ripe for objective manipulation and assembly” (Jardine, Clifford, & Friesen, 2008, p. xv).

My understanding of myself as a teacher was threatened. My teaching was not working. Jardine reminds us that the organisation and imagining of schooling that we “made up” a century ago “has simply worn out” and that “Thinking the world apart”, as we are prone to do when we are focused on grades, outcomes and small replicable pieces of knowledge, “...becomes a betrayal of the life-world, the living world of those teachers and students to whom the healthy continuance of the world and all its living disciplines has been entrusted” (Jardine, Clifford, & Friesen, 2008, p. xv).

I offered something to Jonathan. The transitive verb ‘to offer’ suggests that we present something for acceptance or rejection, that we have something for the use of others. My offering was rejected. I was forced to deal with the situation differently. I needed to get to know Jonathan and his classmates.

Maurice Friedman mentions in the Foreword to Kramer’s *Learning Through Dialogue* that, “In order to enter into a genuine relationship with another, one needs to overcome the way one has been educated” (2013). Our way of having been educated being akin to “Hearing only the teacher’s voice, and seeing things only from the teacher’s point of view” (Friedman in Kramer, 2013, Loc 37). My personal experience of being educated led me to have presuppositions about how I should behave as a teacher. My assumptions were hidden from me until I was challenged to rethink my teaching by the children who rejected my offerings.

My idea for the rabbit-breeding program that Jonathan and his friends got so involved in sprung from my conversations with Jonathan. I realised that teaching did not always have to take place in a formal setting in a cramped classroom environment. Teaching could take place anywhere. I thank Jonathan and others like him for forcing my hand. I had to reconsider my role as a teacher. Jonathan told me about his love of animals. His love of animals gave me the idea about the rabbits. He told me about his love of outdoor adventuring. I took his class camping. We were entering the living world. We were moving away from a reliance on what Jardine (2008) refers to as the “basics as breakdown”. I share Jardine’s desire to examine and rethink what is basic to teaching and learning. Are we caught in a basics as breakdown model that is a “betrayal of the lifeworld” (p.xv), a narrow-

mindful version of what is basic that Jardine maintains is rampant in educational theory and practice? “Imagine if we treated as basic to teaching and learning listening openly and generously to each other” (ibid. p.xi). If we do listen openly and generously to each other, it must be important to behave with tactful agency as van Manen suggests, “Tact shows itself as openness to the child’s experience” (van Manen, 1990, p.169). Working with Jonathan was to become for me another episode of my appreciating that tact must go with touch, which I was coming to connect with a feeling of being near to him, or nearness, and that touch, tact and relationship are triangulated in true pedagogic moments.

If I were to stay near to the students in these ways, I hoped other students would bring their own living questions from their lives to contribute to the life of the classroom. Kramer tells us, “Communication between teachers and students is often inadequate and one-sided. Because the level of communication is not communicative in its own right, educational content doesn’t stick and students aren’t engaged.” (Kramer, 2013, Loc 136) He maintains that in such circumstances, “communication is a rarity”. Kramer draws our attention to Buber’s principle of genuine dialogue. This, he says, will re-shape the traditional power dynamic between teacher and student, “Because genuine dialogue, according to Buber, has three voices – yours, mine and the voice of the dialogical relationship itself” (Kramer, 2013, Loc. 136).

There was the six-week-old rabbit sitting amongst a vast expanse of clover and grass on the edge of the school’s old tennis court. This was the place where, so often, the whole school gathered when someone had, again, set off the fire alarm. It was empty today, except for the rabbit. It was the last day of school for the year and all the students had finally gone home. This was the last day for the Grade 10 students, their very last school day, traditionally an opportunity for them to play tricks and pranks at the expense of teachers and younger students. Someone had let the rabbit out. It was Jonathan’s rabbit.

Jonathan was a leading member of the rabbit-breeding program. He helped to build the hutches, fix the old shed, feed, water, clean

and nurture the rabbits. He named the young rabbit's father, Bruce, after a character in the movie *Finding Nemo*. He had to deal with disappointment. One of our first rabbits died from a mystery disease. He led the discussion with other students as to whether to tell me about the death of 'our' rabbit while I was on leave in the UK. They chose not to tell me in case I would be upset. They chose to wait until I came back from my trip so that they could tell me face-to-face. Jonathan was the one who volunteered to break the news to me.

Jonathan chose 'his' rabbit from the first litter as soon as they grew fur. He picked the smallest one with pale stripes down each side of its orange rump. He rushed to get a school uniform shirt from the school lost property — he rarely wore school uniform — and ran to grab Bruce and took him to show a visiting politician. He was happy to comply with dress code to show off the school rabbit with pride.

He named his rabbit Nemo. He insisted on leaving his young rabbit in its run until he was ready to carry him home as a final triumphant act to mark the end of his school year. Jonathan came to collect his rabbit to find that the cage had been opened and Nemo had been let out. This was one of the pranks played by the older students. He came looking for me and exclaimed, 'Where's my rabbit!' We stood together in disbelief next to the empty cage. What had happened? He fought back the tears as he came to terms with the rabbit's disappearance. He turned brusquely on his heels when the tears no longer stayed back. I watched him as he marched home, the last student to leave.

I approached the rabbit with the intention of recapturing it and returning it to its run. It instinctually knew to hop out of my way as soon as I approached it. This young rabbit was used to being handled but quickly knew how to act like a wild rabbit and remove itself from perceived danger, and my grip. The rabbit and I were engaged in a hide and seek game. It eventually hid under a shipping container and made frequent forays to the attractive

world of grass and clover. I chased around the container, crawling on my hands and knees under the hot afternoon sun as the rabbit went about its business of exploring, and avoiding me.

I had been chasing the rabbit on my own for some time. This was futile. I needed help. I phoned Jonathan's household and spoke to his mother. She told me he was more upset than she had ever seen him. She bellowed to the furthest reaches of the house telling Jonathan to "Get back to school and help Vicky catch the rabbit" declaring that she had "Never seen anyone get so upset over a \*\*\* rabbit before!"

Jonathan appeared at my side in minutes and gently entered the world of the rabbit, with me chasing him. He too was impressed at how 'clever' the rabbit was and began talking softly and encouragingly to his rabbit. It remained illusive and unwilling to be caught. Jonathan and I discussed and tried out various strategies. He was very kind when the rabbit slipped my grasp as I performed a third rate rugby tackle. Jonathan was an accomplished sportsman and demonstrated his patience with me who had much less skill. We finally caught Nemo and returned him to the safety of a cardboard box filled with handpicked clover.

Jonathan chatted to me and asked with interest what I was doing during the summer holidays. He was curious and a little bewildered when I told him I wanted to spend most of my time writing. His parting comment was, "Can't you think of anything else to do?"

The rabbit, like Jonathan, instinctively knew to hop out of my way. How did a young rabbit, born and raised in captivity behave so quickly like a wild rabbit? The rabbit's, and Jonathan's agenda was different to mine. He too resisted captivity, a metaphor for a diet of formal education. Jonathan was bright and had confidence and charisma. The activities and tasks that so often comprised formal education barely held his attention.

Jonathan was impressed with the rabbit's cleverness, increasing his resolve to lure the rabbit to him, his rabbit. He was completely involved in the task of recapturing it, and was kind and patient with me. He was willing

to trial a variety of strategies. He gently entered the world of the rabbit showing that he understood and practised tact. He was sensitive to the situation and knew to be quiet and gentle.

The interest Jonathan took in the rabbits extended far beyond the time he spent in allocated lesson times. The affairs of the rabbits were of constant interest to him. He was thoughtful, considerate and concerned about telling me that one of the rabbits had died. Our pedagogic relationship was well established. Our contact and interest in one another extended beyond official class time. We shared a project. His charisma and enthusiasm brought other students to the daily, ongoing, project. A school-wide dialogue developed around the rabbits and their progress. I let Jonathan take the lead. Kramer reminds us that,

The teacher comes into person to meet and to draw forth the student in new ways (and) experiencing the student from the student's side of the relationship means in turn realising the student's actual uniqueness and viewing the other person as fully meaningful is at the core of teacher-student relationship.

(Kramer, 2013, Loc 42)

van Manen expresses concern that "The life of our active pedagogic involvements with children is growing thin and arid" and asks, "Where is the common sense, the sense we have in common, the basic assumptions and values that constitute the indices of the rich resource, the inexhaustible layers of meaning, of everyday living with children" (1990, p.142)?

My pedagogic involvement was thin and arid before I talked with Jonathan. I asked him what he was interested in. I found out what he loved to do. I discovered his passion. I opened to the inexhaustible layers of meaning revealed to me through my everyday living with the children in my class. van Manen tells us pedagogic tact manifests itself through attunement to subjectivity and, in so doing, preserves a child's space and makes whole what is broken. There is self-evidence about tact in everyday living, it is unplannable, and, if we become open to the way tact works on us as teachers, we discover that tact rules our practice (1990).

I didn't know my students when I struggled with them. I was oriented towards what I taught. I strived for measureable outcomes, as we are so



often required to do as teachers. My orientation was at the expense of knowing the students and knowing who I was as a teacher. As I got to know my students we made whole what was broken. I was open to the experiences of my students, the subjects. Pedagogic tact facilitated my responsiveness to my students and their lifeworld. Kramer draws on and illuminates Buber's philosophy of education as one of Buber's major breakthroughs when he states, "Real learning happens neither because of the teacher's brilliant articulations nor the student's fidelity to the task, but the reciprocal bond between the two" (Kramer, 2013, Loc 99). Here lies a stunning illumination of the roles of relatedness that my thesis is exploring. I learned that relatedness was the breakthrough I needed to be able to teach Jonathan and all the other students like him who challenged my assumptions about teaching. I learned about inclusion and presence, touch and tact.

The key component of the pedagogic relationship is inclusion. Inclusion in this case means "making present", an act of imagining what the other person is thinking, feeling, and experiencing without surrendering one's own stand. Inclusion is beyond what is traditionally expected of students. It is an additional quality of responsibility and consciousness, and is specifically required of the teacher for a genuine dialogue to take place. (Kramer, 2013, Loc 603)

### **Learning as a dialogical interaction**

In this chapter I describe some activities in some of my classes and how I relate to my students. Our everyday living reveals the self-evident nature of tact. My students and I work together. We find mutual delight in our inquiries that are embedded in our lifeworld. What happens when my students do their standard assessments where their outcomes are measured like everyone else? They are engaged, related and responsive to their learning. How do they go in the tests?

Corey turned up for his end-of-year literacy assessment announcing loudly that his mother had given him permission to stay at home that day. She didn't think exams were all that important. She didn't think he could 'do it' anyway. Corey was

often boisterous and provided much entertainment for his classmates. I wondered why he had come today? Did he intend to unhinge the whole exam by disrupting others? Or, had he come along to have a go at the exam for himself in spite of his mother's scepticism? The class was intentional and focused. They organised where to sit and wanted to know about the exam conditions. This exam mattered to them.

Corey wanted to know these things as well. He soon stopped his usual banter and took his place with the others to get his paper, pencil and assessment tasks and sprawled across our sofa, making himself comfortable before tackling the job in hand.

I had observed my students over the past 12 months as they attempted many tasks that tested their comprehension, reading, writing, speaking and listening skills. The tasks were related to the everyday lifeworld that occurred in the class and followed a natural course of inquiry that sprung from the students' interests. There was always conversation, negotiation, discussion and opportunity to acquire and practise being literate. How would this group of students go in a final year examination? I had practiced on-balance assessment throughout the year when observing my students. I had a pretty good idea of what these students were capable of, and I was keen for them to do the same assessment tasks as their peers in other more traditional English classes.

Corey exclaimed that he "Couldn't do this shit!" and that he would just guess. The others in the class were undisturbed by Corey's protestations and turned their attention to their own work. I sat next to Corey and quietly suggested that we read the information together. I would help him with the reading and he was to answer his own comprehension questions. He was positive and enthusiastic and immediately embarked on the task with my help.

The only reading Corey ever did was when he needed to figure out how to do practical tasks. Everything else was off limits. He just wouldn't read or write. He was accomplished at discovering how

to strip and rebuild an engine, drive a tractor, build an animal shelter, make jam and preserves, and pick and sort apples in the summer.

We began to read together. To my delight he read and understood the text pretty well. He was curious, interested and demonstrated his comprehension and analytical skills in interpreting the text and understanding its meaning. Corey had learned to read, comprehend and communicate well enough to tackle a standard English exam and succeed.

“Things change and what is being asked of education thus also changes...We are the ones who stand facing the young, the new, the future and simply facing it with paranoid entrenchment will not do. It is cowardice,” says Jardine (2008, p.xiv). Jardine cautions us against indulging in inverse, vague licentiousness. A new form of openness is required. We are challenged by Smith to engage in a “risky, deliberate engagement, full of the conflict and ambiguity by which new horizons of mutual understanding are achieved” (1999, p.139). My work with Corey was risky. Was it too risky? My responsibilities as a teacher are to avoid cowardice and predictability and choose to deliberately engage with my students, where conflict and ambiguity abound. Can I sit in the fire of conflict and ambiguity? It can be exhausting work. How can I walk a path of risk and engagement and avoid slipping into vague and licentious, irresponsibly free, behaviour?

van Manen tells us,

Teaching can be a complex enterprise when teachers challenge the students to think independently and critically about their learning. Teaching can be risky for teachers who are willing to make themselves vulnerable by engaging students in activities that are not always clearly predictable and controllable. Any “true teaching” moment can pose innumerable questions to the teacher. (van Manen, 2008, p.1)

van Manen’s questions help with my inquiry. “What is in the best interest of this child? What is appropriate and what is less appropriate for these students” (p.1)? My inquiry about the pedagogical good reflects my self-

inquiry. It is an I/Thou inquiry into the nature of inclusion. My students' wellbeing, engagement and success is inextricably linked to my selfhood as a teacher. I can neither be caught in paranoid entrenchment, which would require me to obey rules unquestioningly, nor can I be vague and licentious, which would allow me freedom from moral discipline. van Manen recognises the ineffability and ambiguity of pedagogy.

We may have to accept the possibility that the notion of pedagogy is ineffable, and that no scientific observation or conceptual formulation will lead to an unambiguous definition of pedagogy. If pedagogy is ineffable then it may also be beyond the effort of behavioural teacher competence or parent skill training, since it is not definable or teachable in a direct or straightforward manner...Learning to understand the essence of pedagogy as it manifests itself in particular life circumstances contributes to a more hermeneutic type of competence: a pedagogic thoughtfulness and tact. (van Manen, 1990, p. 142)

Corey could and would read enthusiastically and comprehensively by the time the end-of-year examinations came around, and he passed his English assessment easily. "What is good and what is not good for this child" (van Manen, 1990, p.146)? Was what we did "good" for Corey and his friends? It seems so, they all succeeded. "To be tactful is to "touch" someone" (1990, p.169). Were the students in my class touched? They told me that they felt as though they belonged, they enjoyed class, they succeeded in class, and they developed skills and aptitudes that surpassed all expectation by other teachers in the school. It seems so. "To teach *is* to touch," says van Manen "The teacher touches the student...with voice, eyes, gestures and presence"(2012, p.22). A real teacher, he says, "touches the students with his or her being and mind" (p.22). What made the actions in our class pedagogic? Were the students touched by being and mind?

"Pedagogy is not identical to observable action; rather it resides in that which makes the action pedagogic in the first place," says van Manen (1990, p. 146). "In order to be pedagogic," says Langefeld (1965) cited in van Manen, "Something fundamental to our being human is required. To be able to *do* something, you have to *be* something" (p.147). Pedagogy is not something that can be 'had' or 'possessed', as we can have or possess a set

of skills or competencies. van Manen maintains that pedagogy is something that we, as parents and teachers, must continuously redeem, retrieve, regain and recapture by asking ourselves and being sensitive to what authorises me as a pedagogic teacher or parent.

It is because pedagogy is in a definitive sense, unfathomable that we are invited to engage in the creative activity of pedagogic reflection, which brings the deep meaning of pedagogy to light.

### **Risky, deliberate engagement**

Jim was late. The class became agitated and fiddly when he arrived. I could see why their last teacher had walked out on them after three weeks. They teased each other and were so unsettled. How could we get to know one another and learn how to get along? Why were they so reactive to Jim? Why was he so distressed and disillusioned about coming to class? I had hope for these students and I had hope for myself. I drew on my experience of adventure and in teaching reluctant students. What did these children need to be inspired?

I had bought a miniature eight ball table for a few dollars. Would this work? It became the focus that provided interest, motivation, reward and purpose for the class for many weeks to come. They designed and participated in the Eight Ball League competition that we set up for the final part of each lesson.

Jim took ownership of the eight ball table and regarded it as being his. He loved the competition. He remembered from one day to the next who had won and whose turn it was next. He built a picture in his mind about the order of play. He figured out how to organise a competition ladder and how to record information on a league table. He organised others in the class according to whose turn it was and got them to enter data on the score sheet.

We all talked about strategies to get good results. Questions arose naturally as we developed a culture of playing daily miniature eight ball.

Does it matter how hard we hit the white ball?

What can we do if the ball we want to hit has another one in the way?

What do we have to consider when we choose which ball to aim for?

What can we learn about speed, angle, direction and ball selection so we can do better?

How can we make the competition ladder?

Do we have to 'seed' or rank players to ensure that the better players don't knock each other out in the first round?

Can we learn from other sports to see how league tables work?

The eight ball project was a resounding success. On re-entering high school teaching after a long break I was shocked to see that little had changed. The school timetable looked like the one I had as a student in a Grammar School in the early 70s. This timetable and the expectations of teachers and students to approach mathematics in an abstract disconnected way came from a previous era.

The students learned to craft their own questions about league tables and improving their game. They were motivated and interested. They made connections and links between studying angles, velocity, data management, sorting, and simple arithmetic with what they were learning from their project. The study of mathematics took on personal meaning. I could teach the class when they stopped being distracted by name calling and teasing. I enjoyed teaching and I was delighted with their enthusiasm and creativity. I was fascinated by the mathematical questions that emerged, as they wanted to know how they could play better, organise competitions and record their results. My job as a teacher was made so much easier when my students wanted to learn. Had I discovered how to relate to my students, and by doing so, had I let go of control and allowed them to flourish?

Jim, Jonathan, Andrew, Corey, Peter and many others had taught me more about how I could teach and how I could improve my practice through our shared dialogue.

Our classroom was designed to be like a home. There was a kitchen, a big old floppy lounge that could seat about seven teenagers, a projector and screen with some old speakers and a sub woofer that one of my students had restored the previous year, and a games room with a dartboard and an eight ball table. We had a rabbit hutch and a movable pen for bantam chickens in a nearby yard. The students understood that they were required to engage in a mixture of formal, informal and applied learning that included attending a five-day wilderness camp.

We were on each other's side. My students and I were "furthering our ability to engage more meaningfully with education itself" (Kramer, 2013, Loc 139).

Our classroom had become a place we all wanted to be. I often got to school early on foggy winter mornings to put the heaters on and ensure that it was warm and comfortable in our room in time for the first lesson. In turn, I would plan excursions that required students to arrive at the town's bus stop as early as 8.00am, long before they needed to be at school. I was astounded the first time we did this to witness previously reluctant teenage boys appear out of the freezing fog in time to catch a bus to town before any other student came anywhere near the school. I was also surprised and delighted that they set up their own roster to come into school on the weekends and school holidays to feed, water and clean the pens of the rabbits and chickens. In some instances this required students to make their way to school using public transport. This was no mean feat, as the one rural transport service ran infrequent buses on weekends.

We regularly made jam, ginger beer, pickles and sauces as part of our enterprise program, which formed the basis of a practical maths and literacy program. Jim soon worked out that he could harvest the copious crop of blackberries in the fields around his home and sell them by the kilogram to our class so that we could then cook jam, pies and crumbles to sell to the school community. He showed enthusiasm, took initiative and put in several hours of

work in the evenings and weekends. Jim had transformed from being disaffected, oppositional, lost and underachieving to being able to take charge of his own learning once again. He often approached me early in the morning and wanted to have access to the classroom so that he could get the jam, or other preserves, on the stove so that it would have time to cook during the morning.

Jim hated to be in a formal class. He had been wandering from class to class since he had been in primary school to the point that his teachers at that time 'let him go'. In their opinion he was unteachable and therefore became the responsibility of the school leaders and office staff, as he refused to participate in a usual primary class. Jim became my teacher.

My experiences with these students in a small rural high school challenged my assumptions about teaching.

It is a typically cold, foggy day in our school valley. I hear the sound of laughter as I turn the corner of a particularly windswept section of the school that leads to our classroom. My class and I meet here every morning. They are impatient to get to class and they encourage me to hurry up as I walk towards them. They must have skipped their Home Group to get here this early. I can't skip Home Group, as I am the Home Group teacher, so I inevitably arrive later than my students for their first class of the day. They urge me to hurry. They are impatient and eager to start the first, and their favourite, lesson of the day.

The room is warm, as I had already arrived before school to put the heaters on. Some rush to make themselves toast and hot chocolate and settle in on the corner couches, and others go to check on the rabbit that is brought from its cage to join the students on the couch.

The students report that this is the only time during the day that they rush to class, and occasionally attempt to break into the classroom in their enthusiasm to start their day. The classroom stands alone in a remote area of the school and needs to be locked



when there is no teacher around. The students, who have a strong sense of ownership towards this room, have occasionally ‘accidentally’ left the back door unlatched so that they can return in secret to ‘their’ room in my absence. Of course, once I discovered this tactic I had to check both front and back doors when I left the room to put an end to this practice.

This is how our lessons went. We read together. Sometimes I read to them. At other times they take it in turns to read aloud to the group. These students have learned to listen to each other and they have learned to listen to the story or article we are studying. They all listen. There is no surreptitious mobile phone use as all the phones are kept voluntarily in their pockets or bags. We have an agreement that when we are studying books, articles, stories or films, they will bring their whole attention to that exercise without distraction. The rabbit sits quietly amongst the group and allows the students to pat and stroke it. The presence of the rabbit has a calming effect on the students.

Sometimes we would watch movies. The purpose of watching movies was to understand the stories told in the movies from the perspective of the characters. How did members of the class empathise with the plight of the characters in the stories we examined? Examples of movies were: *Gladiator*, *Cry Freedom*, *Ali*, *Freedom Writers*, *Rabbit Proof Fence*, *The Terminator* series, *Shrek* and many more. We entered into a dialogical relationship with the text of the movies. The students got involved with the characters. They identified with them and they became part of our class. “Does Maximus die”? Exclaimed one student as we watched *Gladiator* over a period of a few days. He cared about the fate of Maximus, our hero.

The students and I discussed the key points of interest and contention that emerged from the story in the movie. Some of the questions were,

What happened in the movie?

Can you describe the main points of the plot?

Was there a character that you identified with?

Can you identify any dilemmas being faced by any of the characters?

How did you feel when...?

What would you have done in their situation?

The practice of teaching and learning as genuine dialogue, *real* education, arises, says Kramer, “in the interaction between and among teacher, students, and subject matter...Each has a voice, a stand and a perspective that is reshaped by the other” (Kramer, 2013, Loc 301). We neither engage in teaching as control nor an alleged freedom of signification where we leave students to their own devices if we are to discover and practise inclusion through our dialogical encounters.

We had a small room at the back of our classroom complex where I had put the small eight ball table. This, of course, was a very popular part of the whole complex and an extremely popular part of the teaching program. We generally used that for ‘free play’ for the final 20 minutes or so of the morning sessions. The students loved to play eight ball. The interesting thing for me was that the small piece of blue chalk that was used for the cue remained intact for the whole year. Everyone who visited that room treated that small piece of chalk carefully and with reverence so that it could be used over and over again by all those who needed their cues to work well when playing eight ball.

The students loved to be in that part of the classroom complex doing that part of the teaching program, playing eight ball. They looked after the common property including the piece of blue chalk used to prepare the cues. Pieces of blue chalk abound in pubs, clubs, and eight ball and snooker halls. The chalk, essential for good operating of the cues just sits there, ready to be used whenever it is needed. It doesn’t seem to get damaged, stolen, pocketed or collected by the patrons of the pubs and clubs the

chalk is just always there. It doesn't get squashed underfoot. The students knew the value of the chalk even though the intrinsic value of the chalk was worth only a few cents. I put the eight ball table in the classroom. It was my pedagogical responsibility to develop a program for the class of reluctant Grade 9 students. The table was part of the equipment in the classroom along with the chalk, cues and balls.

A definition of 'popular' states that whatever is popular is intended for or suited to the taste, understanding, or means of the general public rather than specialists or intellectuals. It was important for the success of the class that the students regarded at least part of the space, place and activities as being popular. My students were reluctant and had had many years of being in classes that they were reluctant to attend, or participate in. The students' previous classes were unpopular for the reluctant ones. They did not want to attend those classes and were reluctant or non-participants. The classes must have not been intended for or suited to the taste, understanding, or means of the general public (student) rather than specialists or intellectuals. Do classes need to be popular in order for students to fully participate? Does the responsibility for popularity lie with the teacher and the curriculum? Is popularity a state of mind? What is our pedagogical responsibility to make classes popular, and therefore accessible to students? If a class is popular for the majority, is it accessible for all? Do specialist and intellectual students miss out? Is popularity the first planning consideration for a teacher?

What questions do we ask ourselves as teachers about how and what to teach? Will the students want to come to my class? Will they enjoy this class? How accessible is this class? Do the students have a sense of belonging? Do they have a say in their own learning? How accessible am I to the students? What do I want to teach? What do I have to teach? How will I teach? Will I let myself be taught by my students? What do I need to know in order to be able to teach? What is pedagogically good? What is my practice? How can I improve my practice?

We agreed to engage in 'free play' together during the final 20 minutes of our lessons by playing eight ball, and sometimes darts. The students and I

discussed the teaching program together and negotiated 'our' curriculum. Whose curriculum was it? The lessons were ours. Of course we had to satisfy the State curriculum requirements and my responsibility as their teacher was to employ my experience, professional training and capacity to teach and inspire to work towards that end. What was my pedagogical responsibility? Is free play part of the curriculum? Do we 'do' the curriculum as if it is free of play? Can students learn while they are playing? Does free mean free to choose?

The time of playing eight ball and darts was more than just being popular. The students were engaged. They were fully present to the task in hand and to each other. They were engaged in acts of strategising, competing, cooperating, reflecting, communicating, forward planning and improving their capacity through practice and involvement.

### **Conflict and ambiguity**

The first piece of blue chalk I provided lasted about three days before somebody hurled it on the floor, stamped on it, and broke it into tiny fragments. After that, I didn't replace the chalk for a number of weeks. This of course meant that the end of the eight ball cue was slippery and difficult to use. I eventually went out and spent a dollar on buying a new piece of chalk. From then on, after each use, it was carefully replaced back onto the windowsill for the next person to use when they needed it. That piece of chalk lasted the whole of the rest of the year.

Some of the students had not yet learned how to look after their things. We had a big problem throughout the school during that time when there was a spate of mindless acts of vandalism. The students who ended up in my class were probably the biggest offenders.

When we first started the experimental class those particular young people were very unpopular amongst the teachers in the school. They experienced the students as being disruptive, aggressive, difficult to teach and difficult to motivate. These students were often the ones who would set

off fire alarms, break into the school premises during the weekends, break windows, write on walls and generally damage property.

My first class to take up residence in this experimental situation displayed anti-social destructive behaviour. There were many times when I despaired of the way that they would kick holes in the walls or engage in destructive and self-destructive acts that hurt others, themselves and the property. There were many despairing moments when I was at a loss as to how to relate to the students, how to persuade them to change their destructive behaviour and how to actually teach them. I didn't know how to address these pressing issues and yet I believed we could all change for the better. How could I change the situation with this group of students who had been suspended so many times from school and whose parents didn't trust the school system? How could I make a difference in the lives of the students who had so little respect for themselves, their surroundings or each other? What changes in attitude and disposition did I need to make in myself in order to move forward from this unhappy position? Was I too going to give up on these students and declare them to be too hard for me to teach?

They had all blamed each other for the damage in the rooms and no one was willing to take responsibility for the kicked in walls and the other damage to property. The classroom complex was set out in a way that made it impossible for me to watch and witness all that was going on, as I could only be in one room at a time. The experiment was already going badly wrong. Maybe we all needed to go back to traditional classes where the teacher could see most of what was going on and the students could continue to be treated as though they couldn't be trusted. They could continue their practice of surreptitious rebellion and non-participation and we could all watch the clock in anticipation of the lesson ending mercifully quickly.

I had to talk to the students and be honest with them about my despair and disappointment about the damage, and to tell them about my own hopes that I had for our possible future working relationship, that wasn't currently working.

It was surprisingly hard to begin. I was honest about my despair and disappointment. I told them that I didn't know how to deal with the persistent damage to property or their denial that any of them were responsible. I told them that we could no longer operate in this classroom if the damage to property continued, as I couldn't adequately supervise them. I told them that we needed to find a way to repair the damage and that we needed to establish a commonly agreed code of conduct where people and property were respected. I revealed to them that I was powerless to change the situation on my own and that I needed their cooperation. I asked them to decide for themselves what they expected from their education, what they wanted from me, and whether they were prepared to contribute anything in order for that to happen. I showed them that I was vulnerable. I also reminded them that I had high hopes that we could learn to work together. I told them that I wanted to trust them to take better care of themselves and each other and that I acknowledged the tremendous amount of energy and potential they had, albeit that it was being used to blame and destroy. I suggested that maybe that energy could be directed to more positive ends.

There was silence amongst the group. The blaming and denial had stopped and they seemed to be listening. One of the students broke the silence, announcing that he would help mend the walls. Others joined in, saying they would do the same. They said that they would chip in to buy plaster and paint. They said that they could get older family members to come in to help them and they could borrow ladders to paint the ceiling.

They said that they didn't want to go back to the old style of classroom and that they liked having the freedom to move from one room to another to do different activities. They wanted to stay. They realised that I needed their help and cooperation if we were to continue together and they agreed to look out for their own and each other's anti-social behaviour. They said that they knew that their behaviour was destructive and, whilst not

admitting to any personal liability, they said that they knew how to change their behaviour. They said that they wanted to be trusted.

I noticed a huge difference in the attitude of the students in my class as we learned to get along together. I made changes to the way I interpreted the curriculum and the way I consulted with, communicated with and responded to that group of reluctant and troubled students who didn't want to be at school. My teaching practice was changing.

What had changed in that moment? Had they been waiting for me to specifically ask for their cooperation? Had they been listening to my words, or had they been 'listening' to something else that I was also revealing to them?

"I told them, I told them, I told them." Isn't this how we so often go about teaching? I tell and they are meant to listen. This telling came at a time when I really needed to communicate with the class honestly and frankly. I found it surprisingly hard to talk with my own students. They were not yet my students and I was not yet their teacher. I did not have a relationship or rapport with the group, any more than the other teachers in the school that already regarded them as being unpopular.

### **I showed them that I was vulnerable**

I showed them that I was vulnerable and I revealed to them that I was powerless to change the situation without their help. The origin of the word 'vulnerable' is related to the Latin word *vellere*, "to pluck, to tear, or to wound" (Online Etymology Dictionary).

I showed the students that I was susceptible to being wounded or hurt, or open to moral attack or criticism. I had let down my guard and was willing to show them that I was despairing, disappointed and at a loss as to how to continue without their cooperation and enrolment in the project.

On reflection, I realise now that I had reached the place of being susceptible to being wounded because this had been 'my' project, which I had not shared with my students. I had been given the task of 'teaching' a group of students who had become adept at refusing to be taught, and I had provided a setting for the teaching program without first negotiating and

consulting with the students. They had responded to my project by destroying themselves, each other, the property, and my project. They came close to destroying me and I had come close to giving up on them, as I was hurt and wounded, and at a loss as to how to proceed with the task of teaching the group.

### **Freedom, popularity, vulnerability, trust and participation**

During an early stage in my teaching career I took groups of young adolescent boys on kayaking trips on the local river. The school did not have any adventure or outdoor programs in place at the time and my first excursion with a small group of notoriously reluctant and recalcitrant students did not go to plan. I had just joined the school as a maths teacher and the group and I were still dancing around one another as I tried to establish myself as their teacher. It had not gone well so far. The boys were proud of their reputation for getting rid of teachers and for them, I was just one more in a long line of people who had appeared in their lives.

I was already familiar with taking groups of young people, displaying a range of ability and intention, on adventure experiences, so I believed I was in comfortable territory with this challenging group when I organised the first kayaking trip. I had learned the importance of teaching capsizing drill, a technique of deliberately turning the kayak upside-down whilst still being in it, exiting the boat and then swimming with the boat and paddle to the safety of the riverbank. It was important for safety reasons for me to know that each person in the group knew what it felt like to come out of a kayak and be upside-down in the water and to rescue themselves from that position. I knew from past experience that people quickly gained confidence with the kayak and overcame the fear of falling out once they had had a controlled experience of doing it. I had demonstrated and supervised this practice so often in the past that I gave it little thought as I talked to the boys about what we were going to do, and that I would demonstrate capsizing first before expecting them to do it themselves.



We set off together in our kayaks around a couple of river bends to a spot away from the bank. The boys feigned interest as I continued my spiel and I remember feeling confident that for the first time I had their attention. The confirmation of my theories and beliefs about the benefits of adventure and experiential education filtered through my being and washed over me like a wave of relief. I had cracked it, these students were interested at last, they were finally on my side, and maybe I did have a future with these people as their teacher? I duly capsized and emerged, cold, wet and committed, to watch the boys wave to me as they paddled their kayaks back around the bend as they headed for home.

The story did not end there. In spite of my humiliation and realisation that I had been set up by this group of seasoned teacher-baiters, this incident was the turning point for our teacher/student relationship. I may in hindsight have attempted this task in a more skilful manner where I would not have left myself so stranded. I did however catch up quickly with the group and was able to communicate with them with an authority that was personal, real and vulnerable. I had offered my passion for teaching, for adventure, for relationship and was offering myself as a teacher. I had no 'teacher tricks' at that moment, tools characteristically used in teachers' struggle for power. I was able to challenge the group from my deep sense of truth. Each boy capsized their kayak that afternoon and allowed me to be their teacher for the first time.

We continued our sometimes-challenging journey of discovery both in maths classes and the outdoors, and word got around the school's student grapevine that I was 'OK' and that 'they', the other students in the school, could 'let up' with their teasing. The boys' behaviour and willingness to engage in class work was never exemplary. We did develop a common language and set of protocols for behaviour that somehow we agreed upon.

The students and I came together with opposite, even contrary worldviews. In coming together we were required to embrace a shared

worldview in which our opposites were joined together and from within which we could see a world clearly in another wholeness. This recalls Palmer's notion of collective appreciation and paradoxical thinking of bringing worldviews together that leads to effective teaching and learning. "When we think things together, we reclaim the life force in the world, in our students, in ourselves" (1998, p.66). Rather than separating head from heart, facts from feelings, theory from practice, and teaching from learning, as Palmer suggests we are prone to do, I, through my naivety and blind optimism, fell into the trap set by my students and was forced to face myself, and in turn, to face them. I was forced to explore my strengths and weaknesses as a teacher, not as either/or but to wrap myself around them and embrace both in paradox that continues to be a lens through which I learn of my selfhood.

## CHAPTER 6

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### THINKING THE WORLD TOGETHER: PORTRAIT OF A PARENT

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#### **Building relationships and connections**

The true community does not arise through peoples having feelings for one another (though indeed not without it), but through, first, their taking their stand in living mutual relation with a living Centre, and, second, their being in living mutual relation with one another. (Buber, (Trans. W. Kauffman) 1970, p.94)

In this chapter I weave my story around Catherine, one of the parents who participated in the many personal and professional programs run by me through the Department of Education in Tasmania.

Catherine's eldest son was six years old when she attended her first professional development workshop. So many of us have continued on our personal, collective and professional journeys since those early days. We have discovered ways of being and knowing that honoured and respected Aboriginal values of community, connectedness, family, culture and place.

My role as curriculum and program leader in Aboriginal Education was to support school communities to teach Aboriginal students in best possible ways. We were guided by Commonwealth and State directives, and nationally agreed goals for Aboriginal Education. I was to help teachers to work with Aboriginal parents and Elders to ask the question, why do Aboriginal students consistently perform less well at school than others of the same age?

My questions became, how could we improve our practice? How could we encourage Aboriginal children to be more involved and successful in school? Palmer (1993) wonders how public dialogue about the relationship between teachers' selfhood and educational reform can become a legitimate

topic. I wondered whether a teacher's understanding of her selfhood might be important in improving pedagogic practice?

I knew nothing of the Fetzer Institute established under the guidance of Palmer, known as the *Courage to Teach* program. We were, at the same time, running personal and professional education programs for teachers and parents in Tasmania, the *Improving Numeracy for Indigenous Students in Secondary Schools*, *Changing Places: Building Better Schools* and *Think Tank* programs. Both the Fetzer Institute and our initiatives identified a correlation between reclaiming and honouring teachers' selfhood and improved educational success for students. We were both working towards revitalising our education systems. Our programs, and Palmer's, invited educators to reclaim their wholeness and strive for a renewal of teachers' spirits in the belief that "good teaching flows from the identity and integrity of the teacher" (Palmer, 1993, p.10).

What mattered to Catherine was that her kids got along at school, did well, made friends, connected to their Aboriginal culture, and enjoyed their education. Of course, she wanted her kids to do well in school. Throughout the life of the education programs her main concern was facing the sometimes-daunting task of raising a family. The ground constantly shifted and changed as her children grew up and faced the challenges, delights, and agonies of childhood and adolescence. Catherine, and the teachers I spoke with, referred to the children in our conversations as their kids. I adopt the term 'kids' here to be true to the Aboriginal parents' language and style of communication. They talked of 'the kids' affectionately, as if talking about the kids brought them more closely into our conversations.

Catherine belongs to an Aboriginal family. Her husband, Colin's identity and connection with his Aboriginal community, language, sense of place, and culture had suffered significant erosion since his childhood. I sensed that Catherine knew of what could become consequences of Colin's dispossession, and that she wanted something different for her children. She made a clear commitment to help her children to have opportunities to understand their Aboriginal heritage and to make connections with their living culture. Her hope for herself and her husband was to reconnect with

a way of being that had been lost to them. She came to our workshops together with her children's teachers in the hope of achieving this.

Catherine remembered so well the first time she went to a residential workshop. It was the first time she had spent a night away from her three young children. Her family were already supporting Catherine in her decision to be an ambassador for them by managing without her when she ventured forth to spend days with us away from home.

The *Changing Places* program was different to many school-improvement professional development programs. Aboriginal parents and community members, Elders and Aboriginal support workers participated with teachers as equal partners. Teachers usually attended professional learning programs as a discrete group. Leaders in the State education department were concerned about including untrained non-professionals and parents in teacher professional education. Would the range of ability and interest in tackling the program hinder the teachers? Would teachers be compromised? Would the program fail?

I had different concerns. Had schools adequately involved and consulted parents as partners in their children's education? Had our teaching profession set itself apart from its parent group and become accustomed to making decisions and acting on the behalf of parents, not with them?

I hoped that teachers could learn to work cooperatively, collaboratively and consultatively with each other and non-professionals alike. I hoped we could develop as a community as we addressed common concerns about Aboriginal children's reluctance to participate in schooling. Were the families of our students an unrecognised resource? Had we not noticed them, or paid them due attention in our quest to improve our schools? Why not involve the people who knew these children? Who would understand best the cultural positioning and worldview of our students? Who could teach us about relationship, connection and cooperative teaching and learning? Who could teach us about the importance to Aboriginal people of family and place better than the Aboriginal people themselves who are already part of our school communities?

I met with Catherine and the teachers at her school. I wanted to know how the Aboriginal children were performing in terms of achievement, school readiness and attendance. A picture emerged for this school that was replicated amongst other primary schools. Aboriginal students were not performing as well as non-Aboriginals, and the gap in achievement increased as the students got older. Aboriginal students were falling behind.

Why was this happening? What could be done to change and improve the situation? What could teachers discover about how children learn? What assumptions prevail in schools that disadvantage Australia's Indigenous people? What support is needed to change teaching practice and school learning environments? How do we find answers to our inquiry?

The teachers in the program asked the Aboriginal students and their parents to assist them to understand how Aboriginal students learn. They asked questions. What were their aspirations and what did they want and expect from their schooling? How could we learn from parents and students about how to improve our practice as teachers? What is important to Aboriginal families? How could our schools do a better job for Aboriginal students? What do Aboriginal students need to succeed and perform well in school? What can we learn from the parents of our students? Are our usual systems adequate for getting to know parents?

As we have discussed in previous chapters, our positivist fragmentary approach to schooling values a way of knowing that is measurable and can be analysed and controlled. Jardine, Patricia Clifford and Sharon Friesen tell us,

Education is labouring under an image of 'the basics' that is no longer viable. The image involves ideas of breaking things down, fragmentation, isolation and the consequent dispensing, manipulation, and control of the smallest, simplest and most meaningless bits and pieces of the living inheritances that are entrusted to teachers and learners in schools. (2008, p.xi)

Is our image of the basics preventing us from effectively teaching Aboriginal students? Can Aboriginal children and their families help us remember our living inheritances? Are we labouring under images of education that separates, distinguishes, excludes and undervalues the

learners to which we are entrusted? Can we imagine ‘the real’ through genuine dialogue and ‘wake up’ from our amnesia?

### **Where am I? Here on the ground of Inclusion**

Buber’s practice of inclusion encourages us to stand on the ground of inclusion where “genuine dialogue, turning and imagining, the real all bring the senses together with one’s perception of the other” (Kramer & Gawlick, 2003, Loc 2701). For Buber, making the real is not a solitary subjective act. We cannot act alone. This can only arise, he says, as a result of our mutual concern between humans. Relational reciprocity and equality is needed for us to be in genuine dialogical relationship. Buber’s notion of genuine dialogue relies on us completely meeting one another. This, he maintains, is our birthright as human beings. “There is no I by itself, but only the I of the I—Thou relationship” (Kramer & Gawlick, 2003, Loc 1424). We enter into genuine human relationship, says Buber, when we teach ourselves to regard other as *Thou* rather than *It*. Our positivist approach habitually remains in a subject/object relationship, as discussed previously. Do we want, and is it possible, to free ourselves from partiality and take Buber’s advice, “Whoever says *Thou* enters into genuine relationship” (2003, Loc 1424)?

Teams of people from 20 schools around Tasmania attended the series of residential professional development workshops. Catherine was joined by an enthusiastic group of teachers, parents, Aboriginal education workers and teacher-aides from her school to take part in our project that was to last for several years.

I asked each person to introduce themselves to the group by telling us who they were, where they were from, and what their hopes and expectations were from the program. Each person gave their name and introduced themselves as a parent, teacher, Aboriginal education worker, university lecturer, volunteer, or teacher-aide. We named our status, title and position as if our titles were the most self-defining and precious elements of who we were. Some introduced themselves as being only a parent or only an Aboriginal community member.

As we were feeling our way in those early days, were we jostling to establish and maintain power and hierarchy by emphasising our status in education? Palmer says that history suggests two primary sources of knowledge, curiosity and control. “As creatures attracted by power; we want knowledge to control our environment, each other, ourselves” (1983, p.7). Did our initial introductions show who seemed to be holding power? Initially the individuals in the group seemed to be behaving as separately from one another. They brought their particular beliefs as to what they could contribute to the situation and what their roles, experience and titles allowed them to do, and who they were allowed to be.

In the continuing discussion, teachers were concerned about the dysfunctional nature of the families of Aboriginal students and felt helpless to change students’ home lives. Parents were frustrated about their children’s lack of interest in school and felt that teachers were disconnected from the students in their class. Aboriginal education workers felt unqualified to make a difference in class. Why? People in the group expressed that they felt defensive, helpless, fragmented and under pressure to perform. They were suspicious of others in the room that were not from ‘their’ classification. They were curious but sceptical of the upcoming program and had little faith that their participation would make a difference. They all assumed that the purpose for meeting was to gather more information, learn more teaching strategies and get more facts about any specific ‘Aboriginal ways’ of learning.

I trusted we could work together to develop a common understanding of how to address issues of Aboriginal student, and school, underperformance. I trusted we could transcend our labels, status and titles and begin to see ourselves as having a common purpose with shared beliefs and values. I hoped we could positively affect the lives of Aboriginal students and their families. Peter Senge tells us in his book *Presence* about his understanding of change and leadership, he says,

The changes in which we will be called upon to participate in the future will be both deeply personal and inherently systemic. Yet the deeper dimensions



of transformational change represent a largely unexplored territory both in current management research and in our understanding of leadership in general. This blind spot concerns not the what and how-but the who: who we are and the inner place of source from which we operate, both individually and collectively. (Senge, 2005, Introduction)

As we were getting to know one another and dropping our titles we were no longer identifying ourselves according to our position and status. I might have imagined that Catherine was imagining that being at a workshop with teachers would daunt her? Would she feel less confident in their company? Didn't teachers go to professional learning programs with other teachers to become more knowledgeable? Isn't the job of a teacher to know more in order to pass their knowledge on to their students? What is the relationship of teachers and parents? Are teachers accountable to parents? How are they accountable? Don't teachers report to parents, or can teachers be involved in learning programs to work alongside parents as co-educators? How do we invest in the wellbeing of children and parents in education?

But Catherine told us what it was like for her as we got to know one another and as we dropped our titles.

When I first went to *Changing Places*, if I think about what I was like prior to that, I'd lost my self-confidence. It was really like stepping out for me that first time I went. And, after a while, it was the inclusivity and how I was just accepted for who I was, and there was no pressure to be anything. I went there as a parent and there were all those teachers there, but soon, I didn't feel like I was just a parent. Some of the things we did there just blew me away, and some of the things that could be done with the things we learned and tried out in our community. My confidence built so that part of it is that we all grew in ourselves and we were able to give more of ourselves to what we were doing because we were given so much as well. And it was so inclusive. All of the kids could participate, not just the academic kids, and they were just all involved and that's what it was like for the group of us that went to *Changing Places*. We were all included and we could all do everything.

Catherine was telling us she no longer felt as though she was just a parent in the company of so many teachers. She could see for herself that teachers, parents and children could share the delight of learning together

and learning in a cohesive community that practiced mutual respect. The group had been acting inclusively and she felt valued.

### **Thinking mathematically was just a game for Catherine.**

I loved being in the same group as Catherine. She showed no fear when trying new ways to approach problem-solving, particularly in maths. She demonstrated that if one way didn't work, she would try another, and encourage us to do the same. As far as she was concerned it was all part of the 'mathematical game', to approach problems from different angles, to look for signs of our collective knowledge, and to draw each one of us into the investigation. Catherine was a natural at thinking like a mathematician. I learned so much from her approach, particularly her confidence, fearlessness, and willingness to think laterally. I found that I could let go of my own fears when I was in her group.

What did I have to lose? Why was I so much more hesitant than Catherine was about trying something new? What were my ideas about how to 'do' maths? How did my fears about my knowledge and competence in maths prevent me, unlike her, from jumping right in and giving it a go? Was I worried that I needed to 'get it right' on the first go? I wonder how deeply ingrained it was for me to approach mathematical investigations as though there was only one method, which I should already know, leading immediately to only one answer? Did I believe that, as a teacher, I needed to know the answers and appear like the expert who 'already knows'? What had become of my sense of playful confidence that allowed me to give it a go and use trial and error?

Catherine and the other parents did not seem to fear being shown up or exposed in the way that I was. Many of my teaching colleagues shared my concern about feeling exposed. They admitted that they too were hesitant about entering fully and confidently into mathematical investigations in the way the parents did. We learned from the parents to let go of our inhibitions and throw ourselves into the task of investigation. We stopped being hampered by any pre-conceived ideas about our reputations and ourselves.

We explored ways to bring our maths teaching alive. We learned new approaches to maths education and gained confidence to break away from traditional rote learning and hierarchical ‘question and answer’ ways of teaching maths that prevailed in many of our schools.

Catherine was not a teacher and she and the other parents embarked enthusiastically and competently on every aspect of the program. She introduced herself as being “just a parent” at our first meeting. She very quickly became an integral member of the group. We all dropped our titles, stopped defining ourselves according to our jobs and status and began to get to know one another in other ways through the activities we shared.

Catherine participated in many more programs over the years. She grew with her children as they progressed through school. During those years she began to have a better appreciation of Aboriginal people’s worldviews, as we all did, and how those perspectives could influence our own. We learned implicitly and explicitly from Aboriginal people. We lived and worked alongside Aboriginal people, listened and spent time in their presence until their ways filtered through to us.

### **Wholeness and holistic ways of being: Being on Big Dog**

An important part of the program involved everyone in Catherine’s family. They accompanied a group of Aboriginal children on a journey to a remote island to participate in the annual mutton-birding season.

Tasmanian Aboriginal people have an intimate relationship with the short-tailed shearwater or the mutton bird. They know the visiting, nesting, breeding, and feeding habits of this remarkable bird that travels the globe each year from Tasmania to the Arctic Circle and back. The birds spend the summer raising their young in sandy coastal burrows on remote islands. Aborigines have for thousands of years lived off the eggs and chicks and used their oil and feathers in countless ways. They continue to travel every autumn to these islands to continue the practice of mutton-birding. Catherine’s family learned to live with the Elders and traditional birders in rudimentary conditions. They learned to find burrows, catch the young birds, carry them back to the shed and prepare them in a traditional way.

They learned about community, land, place, culture and the importance of belonging.

Catherine and her children still talk about their week on Big Dog Island. It was her husband's first positive experience of living amongst an Aboriginal community. They welcomed him. He could live amongst people who were immensely proud of practising their living culture. Their culture has revolved around the lives and seasonal habits of the mutton birds for many thousands of years.

Catherine and her family had been spending time with Elders in their heartlands on Big Dog Island. Aboriginal people follow the path of the mutton bird in their dreams. Their lives revolve around the activities of this small sea bird. Aboriginal people smell the birds on the air when they return. They know when the adult birds scratch out their burrows, lay their eggs, and take turns to feed their chicks and travel out to sea for food, day after day. They know when the chicks are ready for harvest. They know how many chicks to take. They know how to care for the burrows and respect the birds. They know how to use every part of the bird for food, medicine, and warmth. There is no waste. They are intimately and spiritually connected to the birds in a continuing and vibrant cultural practice, like many indigenous people around the world who live from and know their food source (Lopez, 1998). Aboriginal children are intimately involved in the practice of mutton-birding that contrasts starkly with their lack of involvement in schools. Can we draw on what we know about Aboriginal people's passions to understand how to change our schools and ourselves?

I recall my own experience of being on Big Dog Island. When we went birding, we learned everything. It was all there. We learned from the Elders. Their families and communities were involved. It was a whole experience. It wasn't fragmented and chopped up, like the school curriculum, into short disconnected lessons. We conversed and related. We worked together to get the birds in. We watched the weather and watched out for each other. We got up early to get the fire going, get the breakfast on, and get the first load of birds before the snakes started to move around in the sun. The Elders showed us what to do. They told us how important it was to be continuing their cultural practices. They told us how important it was to teach the

young ones and pass on their knowledge. We were all delighted. This looked like a whole education. There was no hint of disaffection amongst the students. They told us their stories and accounts of their experiences with enthusiasm and skill. They were animated, articulate and connected. Was this an example of practising pedagogic good? Hubert Dreyfus and Sean Kelly's work, *All things shining: Reading the Western classics to find meaning in a secular age* (2011) reminds me to appreciate how we return from our adventures and bring back with us treasures gleaned from thinking the world together.

### Bringing back “all things shining”

Catherine reported that the usual means of involving parents in their children's education was nowhere near as challenging or rewarding as the *Changing Places* program. She was part of the group, a fellow educator, with a particularly valuable perspective to offer. She was a mother of three Aboriginal children who thrived, belonged and participated in so many aspects of her children's school life. She brought back treasures from her journeys to Big Dog Island, to *Changing Places*, *Think Tank* and Holotropic breathwork retreats.

She visited many classes over the years and easily identified the ones with inspired and supportive teachers. She could see the exciting changes in the children who were taught well. Everyone in those classes were encouraged to explore new ways of learning and relating. The *Changing Places* participants grew in themselves and could give more of themselves. They were willing to research together, participate in everything, try things out, report to each other and learn from others in their field. Catherine tells us,

This is what built over the years. I walked into different classrooms in the school and I saw the difference between teachers who had been to *Changing Places* and teachers who hadn't, and the feel in the classroom. Everything about the classroom — the excitement of the kids in the *Changing Places* classes was, in comparison to the dullness in the other classes, so that was something that was happening and that was really exciting. It was exciting to see the changes in the children in the classes and the teachers were so excited by it all. So why did that happen?

In the course of my work with teachers and Aboriginal parents, Elders and children we explored and expressed our emerging understanding of connection and relationship with land, family, place, culture and community.

I introduced the “Ground of Being” exercise, described in Chapter 2, at a two-day residential course we held on Country, on a beautiful coastal island. The place was important to assist us to connect to each other and the land. The Aboriginal people in our group had taught us about their connection to Country, it was fitting to do our work in a place that fed our souls and showed us how we could understand our inter-connections and sense of coherence.

In the exercise I asked participants to list as many people they could remember who had been significant to them in some way in their lives I encouraged participants to be imaginative and to think broadly about how people could be teachers to us. Someone’s writing or other activities may, for example, have influenced them even though they had not actually met them. I stressed that people did not need to be living to make it to the list. They did not need to like them, or what they did, or stood for.

I invited them to list, in turn, other phenomena such as events, animals, places and incidents that had made a similar effect and then to select one and write a letter to express any realisations, appreciation, unfinished business, or anything else they wished to ‘say’ to their chosen subject.

Many people chose to share their writings with the group. They reported that the experience had been very powerful for them, both personally and communally. One person told us that she had written letters to two people. She told us that she had dared to say things in her letters that she had not yet been prepared to reveal to herself. She was moved by the process and reported that she had not ever considered the enormity of her connection and inter-connection with the surrounding phenomena of her life. Another reported that she thought of herself as an individual entity travelling on a linear journey where she had chance encounters with other individuals as they went about their business in a world of inanimate ‘things’. Exploring moved her, and she appreciated the extent of how life events had been for

her in contributing to who she had become. After appreciating how influenced and connected we are with all our life experience she began to question her assumptions about being alone in a world of things and linear time. One member of the group chose to write to someone who had had a profound effect on him even though they had never met. The person he chose was a teacher who had lived and died in another era who revealed himself to the participant through a legacy of memoirs and historical evidence. He reported that through this writing and contemplation exercise he had deepened his relationship and appreciation of a character with whom he was becoming inextricably linked. His sense of interconnectedness extended to someone he had not met personally, and yet he knew him.

We did the exercise together to begin mapping our connections with some of the people, places, events and sentient beings we have encountered throughout our lives. We began to appreciate our interdependence. In so doing, we allowed space for further contemplation of the extent of our connectedness. We brought our thoughts and findings to light for sharing and discussion. “We were beginning to know reality by being in community with it ourselves” (Palmer, 1993, p.97).

Buber distinguishes between the person and the individual stating that “A person lives *with* the world; the individual lives *in* the world” (Kramer, & Gawlick, 2003, Loc 1573). If we were able to develop a sense of community together in our professional learning, as persons who live with our world, can we do this in our schools? Jardine urges us to re-imagine ‘the basics’ and learn from hermeneutics. A hermeneutic view of the world, like Buber’s, live with rather than in the world.

What would happen to our understanding of teaching and learning if we stepped away from this image of basics-as-breakdown? What would happen if we took seriously the critiques of breakdown that come from contemporary hermeneutics and from ecology and took to heart from these critiques of breakdown different possibilities for re-imagining ‘the basics’? (Jardine et al., 2008, p.xi)

What are barriers to learning that students in our schools experience? What interferes with our and our students’ capacity to learn? How do we

learn best together? Why are Aboriginal children falling behind their peers? Why, and what, are we measuring in education? What is a good education? Could the critiques of breakdown from hermeneutics provide possibilities for us to re-imagine the basics?

Palmer describes a kind of knowledge that is available to us, knowledge that is no less sound in fact and theory, but which springs from a truer passion. This knowledge originates from compassion, or love. “The goal of a knowledge arising from love is the reunification and reconstruction of broken selves and worlds” (Palmer, 1993, p.8). Rather than us being separate entities operating in an impersonal mechanistic world, were we, in our workshops, cooperating within the context of a coherent universe? Could we continue to connect with each other and make a difference to our broken education systems through knowing and compassion?

I am encouraged and inspired to implement professional education that explores the heart of teaching and recognises the importance of nurturing the identity and integrity of teachers and parents. My lived experience and work with Aboriginal people has strengthened my resolve to stand on the ground of inclusion. I am learning to honour the wisdom of Aboriginal people’s understanding of community. We can together demonstrate “knowing in community” (Palmer, 1998, p.90). Would “knowing in community” and pedagogy of relatedness change things for our children?

Contemporary science accepts that sub-atomic non-local particles behave as if they are connected and there is possibility for communication. Images of reality that emerge from recent physics render social alienation and our dominant attachment to atomism as being naïve. “So-called particles, widely separated in time and space, seem to be connected in ways that make them act less like isolated individuals and more like participants in an interactive and interdependent community” (Palmer, 1993, p.96). Are particles, like we humans, living with the world rather than in it? Is our wholeness dependent on us viewing our world as an unbroken whole, in dialogue, and in community?



## Relational knowing: a place called home

The *Changing Places* group next agreed to participate in guided meditation to search for a place within them they could call “home” (Pearson & Nolan, 1991). They imagined, or returned in their minds, to a beautiful natural place that they had encountered or were familiar with. They explored that place and allowed themselves to take time to experience being there, and rest. They wrote or drew whatever came to mind once they returned. Each person partnered with another to share his or her experience.

Comparative strangers were so willing and open to doing this exercise and to share their insights with one another. People shared heartfelt stories of personal loss, love, resilience and courage. They reported on the transformative nature of finding a place of homecoming within themselves. They reported how affirming it was to share deep personal stories with others in the group. Some observed how vast and familiar their inner landscape was to them. It was a place of refuge for many. Some people talked of suffering and loss.

Palmer talks of a homecoming where “No matter where we are or what condition we are in or how many obstacles are before us, we can always come back home through a simple inward turning” (1998, p.10). We realise that we are at home in a universe, or reality, that both embraces the smallness of ‘I’ and the vastness of ‘not I’ with ease, and we can become integral parts of a great web of life — a knowing, that transforms our fear of separateness towards a wholeness of being. I asked each person in the group to describe their place as much as they could. What were its qualities? How did it feel to be in their place of refuge? Were they able to relax and be themselves there? What was it about their place that helped them to relax? Were they able to find such a place? Was their place familiar to them?

When we come home to ourselves and find refuge by turning inwards can we find our home within the great web of life, in community with one another? Can we re-think our understanding of community?

Palmer discusses modern images of community and points out the limitations for education of therapeutic, civic and marketing models of community. These models are familiar to us. The therapeutic community

model places its highest value on intimacy alone and inadvertently isolates and drives people apart. A civic model operates from an impersonal, platonic, sharing of space and resources. And a marketing model stresses accountability where we may compromise our philosophically sound practices for fear of being judged and driven by market forces (1993). Palmer proposes a comprehensive form of community that incorporates aspects of all the previously described models yet goes deeper into assumptions about the nature of reality and how we know it. He suggests, “the hallmark of the community of truth is in its claim that reality is a web of communal relationships, and we can know reality only by being in community with it” (Palmer, 1998, p.95).

Can we experience wholeness by learning together and opening to deep aspects of belonging? Can our natural awakened human state facilitate our participation in a self-aware coherent universe with a full sense of agency, identity, community, and integrity? Is this awakened state a whole experience of being human? Can we shape the whole universal story by aspiring to be fully human?

### **Knowing in Community**

What can we learn from the creatures around us? How do they behave in community? Have we lost sight of how to think and act for the common good? I had my opportunity to learn from bees about collective consciousness.

I first noticed one bee in our house. I wondered how it had been able to get into the house that had screens on every door and window. The next day, there were at least 100 bees swirling around in my bedroom. Where had they come from and what was I to do next? It was nearing dusk and I was not yet aware that there were many more bees outside the house. I had never encountered a bee swarm before and I didn't know anything about the behaviour of bees in spring and summer. I had visited a rural supermarket that day and I had read some of the advertisements and community notices that were pinned up in the window. The one that

particularly drew my attention was a hand-written note telling me that the owner of the phone number removed bee swarms. I was fascinated by that advertisement and I wondered why anyone would need to have swarms of bees removed?

Hours later, we had an infestation of bees in our house. Where was that number? Who could help us with this dilemma? Who could teach me about bee behaviour so that they could be safely removed? What a strange coincidence that, on that day, I noticed the bee swarm advertisement.

We tracked down a bee expert who agreed to come and help the next morning. In the meantime we had to shut the room down and leave the bees alone for the night to avoid disturbing them.

I learned so much about bees after encountering the swarm. They decided a small cupboard in the eaves of our house would make a great new home for them. I learned that the bees in a new swarm leave their hive with a queen to set up a colony elsewhere. They send out scouts who hunt around looking for a suitable dwelling, while the rest of the swarm cling together on a branch waiting for information to come back from the scouts. I learned that the scouts communicate with each other. They need several scouts to agree on the best place before returning to the swarm. It took several hundred of them to figure out that my cupboard was to be their new home. They entered through a small hole in the eaves of the house. Some of them got confused and left the cupboard through another gap into the bedroom instead of going back through the original exit hole. This action led to bee pandemonium, as the ones inside the house lost touch with their swarm and could not get back outside.

The bee expert explained that they might have already taken up residence and, if that were the case, it would be very hard to persuade them to leave without pulling the cladding off the wall. We put on our protective clothing, climbed a rickety ladder, and began removing some of the wall to try to encourage the bees to

leave the cavity. We were interrupted by a loud whirring sound as thousands of bees took off into the sky from their resting place, deciding at that very moment to move *en mass* to the hole in the eaves to ‘move in’ to their new home. They clung to the roof of the house in a huge clump and began patiently waiting for their turn to go in.

The bee swarm demonstrated a collective intelligence as the individuals worked together to find a new home. Have we moved so far away from our collective sense of wellbeing and cooperation that we have, without realising, set ourselves up in competition with each other? Are we teaching our children to be competitive, isolated and individualist in an impersonal fragmented world of scarcity? Can we learn from the bees to know in community? Can we learn from the bees’ intelligence?

We at *Changing Places* gradually shifted from being a collection of individuals who reported feeling frustrated, suspicious, overworked, overwhelmed, defensive and anxious to becoming a cohesive group prepared to engage in deeper levels of learning to become agents of change. We were no longer engaged in what Senge (2005) might refer to as reactive learning.

Senge calls for new ways of thinking and learning that challenge our limited and industrialised, habitualised ways of learning that he calls reactive learning. Reactive learning is what we are most likely to revert to when we are in a state of fear and anxiety. Senge describes reactive learning as “governed by ‘downloading’ habitual ways of thinking, of continuing to see the world within the familiar categories we are comfortable with” (2005, p19).

### **Nourishing terrains**

It is several years now since Catherine and I first met. Catherine participated in a journey of self-discovery through her work with Holotropic breathwork. She had attended professional development workshops with teachers where we grappled with complex mathematical ideas. She would return home from her adventures and talk to her children about her

discoveries. She would tell them what she had learned and how she had felt. She shared with her children about her joy, confusion, pain and revelation as she embarked on the demanding work of self-education and discovery. She shared what it was like for her to be a member of a learning community and what it was like to learn new ideas and concepts. She accompanied her children to their own workshops and community events. She had taken them to Big Dog Island.

Catherine learned to practice expressive therapies and counselling for children. She learned to validate her own experiences and those of her children. Her children transformed as she developed her selfhood. She became a teacher-assistant at her children's school. She became part of an interconnected web of support with the teachers, students and other parents in her school community. She practiced sand play and symbol work to encourage imaginative play, storytelling and writing. She worked with the teachers using small objects and figurines the children could arrange in a miniature world created and built from sand or bush materials in a class, bush or beach environment. Children used their imagination and naturally worked with metaphor through the Jungian sand play technique (Kalff, 1971, 1980).

She accompanied her own children over a period of many years to the *Think Tank* program where groups of Aboriginal students met every few months to explore land, place, culture, community, relationship and family.

In a conversation we had, I asked her if she could tell me what her experiences were like for her.

You set up a fantastic thing by doing all this. It's hard to pinpoint exactly what it was that made it easy for me, but it was completely inclusive and so there was no judgement. And that worked for everybody who was involved as an adult, and then that went back into the classroom as well. I think that's why it worked so well. I just saw the confidence in kids building over the whole period really. And using the *Task Centre*, maths stuff, and all sorts of things we used in the Aboriginal Homework Centre. The kids who were really struggling with school and being accepted at school suddenly started to belong. And they felt completely accepted and able to do things and were happy to do things. I think sometimes in the old model of schooling that only

certain kids got opportunities, whereas this was totally inclusive. And *Think Tank* was just great because for the Aboriginal kids it was their special time and it made them more confident and proud. They were proud to be Aboriginal. Hopefully we are growing up children that are not going to be racially prejudiced and all those boundaries will come crashing down, and that sort of thing spreads.

Catherine tells us that the Aboriginal kids could be proud, could belong, and stopped struggling at school. She feels accepted and not judged. What had happened in the workshop is starting to happen in the classroom. When Catherine speaks like this I find it possible to believe that something transformational is happening when we work together as community where we value one another and where we belong — pedagogy transforms with touch and tact.

### Whose story?

We had a large group of 90 Aboriginal students, their teachers and parents at one of our *Think Tank* workshops. Aunty Pauline, a well-known and much loved Elder joined us for the day. We wanted the students to get to know her better and to hear her story, and she agreed to be interviewed by them.

Storytelling is culturally significant for Aboriginal people and they have a rich history of orally sharing, teaching, communicating and passing on information.

The program had gained in popularity after very poor attendance in its first year. We went from 15 students attending in its first year to 75 in the second. Had we won the trust of the Aboriginal students and their families? Dozens of excited children arrived and began piling in through the door, filling the small community hall to capacity. How could we run a program that was better suited for a group of 40 or so when we had double the numbers?

First they listened to Aunty Pauline's introduction and then decided together on what questions they could ask of her that could help her tell her story. Imagine if we, as *basic* to teaching and learning, were listening openly

and generously to each other in a large round group. We sat, as best we could in the space available, and listened. Naturally, we were sitting in a way that Jardine might suggest as being “*basic* to teaching and learning”. We practised a listening that was open and generous toward each other (Jardine, Clifford, & Friesen, 2008, p.xi).

The students then worked in small groups, and soon understood that closed questions left the interviewee little option but to respond with one-word answers. They wanted to know about Aunty Pauline and her life and they wanted rich answers to their questions. They quickly appreciated that open questions gave her an opportunity to elaborate more fully and encouraged her to talk about her life. The students showed interest and respect as they listened as she talked to the entire group of 90 people. She talked for over an hour as she engaged in discussion prompted by more than 30 questions put to her by an enthusiastic group of children. They were engaged and fascinated, as they fully participated in the deeply important cultural practice of dialogue. The students’ attention and behaviour was exemplary.

I asked each group to write about Aunty Pauline’s story based on what they learned from the interview. I noticed that none of the students had taken any written notes. They had listened very attentively and had shown immense powers of concentration. They did not need the help of written notes.

Aunty Pauline was visibly moved and told us that it was such an honour to hear that young people from her beloved culture and nation were showing a profound interest and intelligence in re-telling her story. The students reported how important it had been for them and that they were so happy to see how proud Aunty Pauline was. The teachers and I witnessed a very important community event that was woven around the simple act of storying.

“Whose stories were being told that day?” I asked. Some children said they were Aunty Pauline’s stories as they were about her and her life. “Who told the stories?” “Who heard the stories?” All of us had heard the stories. “Whose stories were they?” We became aware that these stories had now

become *our* stories—the act of storying had been a gift that we were offering to each other to hear again. We had grown together in community, individually and collectively by sharing ourselves with one another, as teller, listener and re-teller. We had engaged in a storying process that was working on us and changing us and we were demonstrating how we could profoundly affect each other through our pedagogic dialogue. As Jardine, Clifford and Frieson say,

Imagine if we treated *these* things as ‘the basics’ of teaching and learning, relation, ancestry, commitment, participation, interdependence, belonging, desire, conversation, memory, place, topography, tradition, inheritance, experience, identity, difference, renewal, generativity, intergenerationality, discipline, care, strengthening, attention, devotion, transformation, character? (2008, p.xi)

Jardine et al implore us to consider our work in community as the real basics of teaching and learning that show qualities of connecting and relating. This approach mirrors and replicates value systems that are so familiar for Aboriginal communities. Is it that Aboriginal children thrive when schools appreciate the importance of these basics?

Catherine told me about what she thought her self-discovery meant for those around her.

And as for the breathwork, just the personal growth and getting to understand myself is so important. By understanding myself more I can give more of myself and I can understand other people more, we can all do that. I think that’s what we are doing. And the relationships that build is astonishing. Those people are my friends now. I would never have known anything about that if it weren’t for those programs. It’s incredible.

It’s funny with Holotropic breathwork, just how similar we all are, which we don’t realise if we are off doing our own little thing. If I think, “I’ve got these problems” and “I’ve got this” and whatever. But when I go somewhere where people are just so completely open and honest I realise that we’re all so similar. How many times do we do breathwork where everyone’s saying almost the same thing? Almost like it’s the same experience. That makes me appreciate that everyone in the world has similarities. I think it is this inclusivity when I get a sense that we’re all part of something bigger. It’s not like we’re separate beings running around doing our own thing. There’s no difference, it



doesn't matter where you're from or what you are or where you started life.  
We're all human. We share so much in common.

Catherine identified how connected she felt to a larger whole that we share as humans. She recognised our commonalities and suggested that it is our sense of separateness that causes distress and anxiety for us. She experienced being part of a group who were open and honest. Did Catherine have a lived experience of Being on ground, of inclusion, and knowing in community? She observes, "By understanding myself more I can give more of myself, and I can understand other people more."

We realise the importance of knowing ourselves in order to know one another (van Manen, 2012; Jardine, 2012; Palmer, 1993; and Whitehead, 2007). Palmer urges us to "Know as we are known" (p.16). Jack Whitehead is influenced by Nelson Mandela. He recognises Mandela's "Ubuntu ways of being, inquiring and knowing" as ways that are "relationally dynamic and flow with life-affirming energy" (2007). Can we apply these principles to our personal and professional lives?

*Ubuntu* is a Southern African philosophy explained by Michael Onyebuchi Eze,

"A person is a person through other people" strikes an affirmation of one's humanity through recognition of an "other" in his or her uniqueness and difference. It is a demand for a creative intersubjective formation in which the "other" becomes a mirror (but only a mirror) for my subjectivity. This idealism suggests to us that humanity is not embedded in my person solely as an individual; my humanity is co-substantively bestowed upon the other and me. Humanity is a quality we owe to each other. We create each other and need to sustain this otherness creation. And if we belong to each other, we participate in our creations: we are because you are, and since you are, definitely I am. The 'I am' is not a rigid subject, but a dynamic self-constitution dependent on this otherness creation of relation and distance. (2010, pp.190-191)

We are known by our otherness, as Catherine observed. She discovered what it was like for her and her children to belong.

*Ubuntu*, according to Desmond Tutu, emphasises belonging, participation and sharing. "In essence, I am because you are." *Ubuntu* is the

essence of being human. We can't be human beings in isolation. We are interconnected and we can't do it all by ourselves. When we have this quality of Ubuntu we are known by our generosity. We think of ourselves so often as just individuals, separated from one another, whereas we are connected and what we do affects the whole world. Our work is for the whole of humanity (Tutu, 2013).

Catherine said,

I've really grown in confidence, in my self-understanding. I feel like I know myself a little bit better and I know my strengths and weaknesses. Because I understand a lot more about myself and I am therefore able to give more of myself. I wonder? What would've happened without all this stuff? I've said that to you Vicky that I wonder where I'd be without *Changing Places* and everything that came after. And where would the kids be? How different would they be? I think they've become really lovely young adults and have beautiful open hearts. If I hadn't been able to give myself to them as much as I have, would that have happened? And would they be giving back as much as they do, because we give and receive.

I was thinking about our ability, which *Changing Places* was about, as its very name suggests, to walk in someone else's footprints. We are egocentric and we think we are the centre of the universe. But as we get to know each other, we realise, our world becomes a bit bigger. And it's really quite a high level of thinking, to empathise at a deep level, to understand someone else's position. I think that's what that program was doing. It helped us to attain that higher level of thinking to become able to see something from someone else's perspective and to empathise with others. It's one of the values of education, and a privilege. It makes me realise the privileged position that we are all in as parents and educators to be able to influence other people.

In a conversation, I mentioned that Jardine suggests that principles of relation, ancestry, commitment, participation, inter-dependence, belonging, desire, conversation, memory, place, tradition, discipline, and care, are vital principles to attend to if we are to be effective teachers and learners. I asked her how she thought we might have addressed these principles in our work together? Catherine responded enthusiastically by saying,

I think the programs covered all of them, each of the principles mentioned above. Then add to that us getting together and talking about what's going

on, what we're doing in our classrooms and how it's all falling into place. I think that those programs have actually shown me that those values are important, where I might not have realised myself when I was growing up. Even when the kids were little, I didn't really think about what's important in teaching and learning. I think it opened my eyes to that the principles we are discussing are really important. And to give them the respect and feedback is so important.

I'm just thinking about my own schooling, this discussion is bringing up all those memories for me, and I'm thinking of teachers I liked and didn't like, and it was the ones that were really negative and said "If you don't do this..." and I just went, "Okay, well I won't then." The teachers that I really liked had the classes that I went really well in. When I think about the different ways they taught, apart from positive and negative feedback, they were the teachers that were more open and more honest in themselves and gave more of themselves.

I'm just thinking about the boys we worked with together, and how important that connection was. Until we made a connection with them it was impossible to do anything with them.

As we completed our conversation, she remarked,

All of this stuff has been life changing for me and for everyone around me, and for everyone that I touch. There's been a flow on effect in every aspect of my life.

Catherine's children are young adults engaged in University study and travel. Two of her children have Indigenous scholarships to study engineering and bio-medical engineering. Their success and direction is testimony to their life experiences. Have their home and school life, involvement with their Aboriginal friends, and their identity as Aboriginal people been influenced by Catherine's involvement in the programs? Has their self-knowledge within community, and their connection to places, people and things contributed to their worldview and wholeness as people? Her children have experienced belonging, connection to place and connection to 'Country' as described by so many Aboriginal people when we are inextricably connected and interrelated with all other phenomena.

Deborah Bird Rose has learned from Aboriginal people about their understanding of 'Country'. Is this a way to describe this principle of interconnectedness?

Country, which starts with the idea that country, to use the philosopher's term, is a nourishing terrain. Country for Aboriginal people is a proper noun. People talk about country in the same way they would talk about another person; they speak to country, sing to country, visit country, worry about country, feel sorry for country, and long for country. People say that country knows, hears, smells, takes notice, takes care, is sorry or happy. Country is not a generalised or undifferentiated type of place, such as one might indicate with terms like 'spending a day in the country', or 'going up the country'. Rather, country is a living entity with a yesterday, today and tomorrow, with a consciousness, and a will toward life. Because of this richness, country is home, and peace, and nourishment for body, mind and spirit; heart's ease. (Rose, 1996, p.7)

I am because you are. Our work is for the whole of humanity.

## CHAPTER 7

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### PORTRAITS OF THREE TEACHERS

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When I see my son's teacher I do not just perceive a man or a woman. I see a person who differs from other men and women precisely in that respect which makes me talk of this person as "a teacher." In other words, I, as everybody else, have a notion of what a teacher is. But what is much more difficult is to come to a reflective determination and explication of what a teacher is. (van Manen, 1990, p.77)

In this chapter I attempt to portray how three of us *are* as teachers. Does our portraiture tell us something of our beingness? We explore our selfhood through entering into dialogue. We wonder, reflect and determine who we have become through our personal and professional work, done together, alongside the students and parents of our schools. I wonder how we have changed over the years we have journeyed together.

#### What is a teacher?

Gemma and Sarah, two teachers who participated in the *Changing Places* and *Think Tank* programs, talked to me about how they experienced their personal and professional journey during the years we worked together. Through my conversations with them we glimpse something of who they are as teachers and how they believe their self and community knowledge has changed them and the children they teach. In following hermeneutic and phenomenological principles, rather than observing teachers' behaviour or measuring their students' outcomes, I asked Gemma and Sarah to tell me how it was for them to participate in the programs and how they imagined they were 'living the world together' in their lives as teachers. Was their involvement in the programs, and their classes, pedagogically good?

Gemma still remembered the excitement of being involved in the professional learning programs. "I just loved the work and the activities,"

she said. I find it rare for teachers to love the work and the activities, or to be excited about professional learning. There is much emphasis on learning how to teach in teacher professional learning. Are teachers weary of a technique-based emphasis in teacher education? What was it about the work and the activities we did that got Gemma so excited and involved? Her own excitement and involvement inspired her to do exciting things in her class, which inspired and excited the children. Gemma told me,

What works best is when the children are inspired and we can go deeply into something. It's particularly when we build connections with the world around us, with the community, and develop relationships. These (practices) all came out of the *Changing Places* program.

What happens when we go deeply into something and build connections with our world and community, and with the children in our classes?

That was the power of when we did the community Expo, all that work at Meadow View, when it was such a disenfranchised community and there were so many problems.

Gemma helped the children to love their work. Gemma situated herself in the community with the children, as she had done in the program, and they set out together to go deeply and make connections with their world.

There was proof because people became connected to their community, to each other.

Her disenfranchised school community became connected at the moment the children became connected to each other and their community. "They (the children) had so much when they thought they had nothing," said Gemma. The children were able to celebrate as they found community groups that had always been there but had been hidden from them. In hermeneutics and phenomenology we appreciate that the hidden, whilst absent, is nevertheless present. The notion of moments being filled with present and absent intendings, through the sides, aspects and profiles of pieces, which are connected to a whole, is illustrated here when children found that they had so much when they thought they had nothing (Sokolowski, 2000).

They were shocked and stunned at what they had in their community once they brought it all together.

Their school Expo was powerful. It brought the community together and revealed so much about the richness of their connected lifeworlds. The community and their children were no longer hidden from each other. Gemma's powerful pedagogical practice had brought impressive changes to people's everyday lives. The children had brought the community together through their Expo and their curiosity. They had ventured forth to discover what had already been there for them.

I asked Gemma how her experiences might have affected her and her relationship with the children. She said that as they were all learning together it deepened her connection with the children because she was a part of it all as well. She told me that the children were starting to tell her stuff that she didn't know about them. This was a new connection with the children that was not made when she practiced her "old way of teaching." She and her students were developing a new culture of sharing their experiences in a climate of trust. Being in relation, and touching are synonyms of being in connection. Has Gemma identified that an important difference between her old and new ways of teaching deepened the quality of relatedness and touch as she and her students learned together?

This new way was different. Gemma got the children to use different genres to write up their community stories. She called it 'Writing with Passion'. They chose something they were passionate about before they got to write about it. They chose their own genre to describe their community work. She worked with the class to build a frog pond in a forgotten area of the school. They got the rocks, dug the hole, and found the plants and then the frogs, but the frogs came by themselves. They found out how to waterproof the hole and get the water into it. They had to make the pond good enough for the frogs. The whole community got involved. Parents brought rocks to school and donated waterproof pond lining. Gemma told me the frogs found their own way to the pond once the pond was completed. The children found that the frogs, like the community groups, were already there in their neighbourhood, they revealed themselves when the conditions were right — once the children's pond was complete.

The children learned to write narratives, reports, stories, formal letters, instructions, poetry and technical reports to get their frog pond and describe the process. They wrote with passion, they were passionate. They loved their frog pond. Gemma loved to teach. They loved their teacher. Gemma was learning alongside her students. Gemma was teaching a new way.

Things just became part of my philosophy. When I repeat the same old stuff over and over again I expect the children to just know it. I lose connection with them and myself if I do that. We can share deeply when we are all learning together. I don't want to go back to that old way.

Her philosophy of being inspired and inspiring and being prepared to learn alongside the children became her pedagogy.

How can Gemma be both a teacher and a learner at the same time? Why did her strategy of self-positioning have such a profound effect on her and her class? How does this way of being differ from her old understanding of how to teach?

Gemma noticed how willing the children were to tell her things she didn't know about them and how excited they were to be involved in their project.

Some of the ways that helped us (the *Changing Places* group) to get to know each other worked for getting to know the kids and getting to know who they were. It helped to develop that deeper connection and to really let them have that opportunity to let things out. We got to see such a different side of the kids and got to understand them so much better. It helped me to understand where some of their reluctance comes from, and their disconnection. It helped me to figure out how to work with them to build their confidence in themselves.

The children were from a disenfranchised community — voiceless and socially isolated due to poverty. How would they expect to be treated by their teacher in a school that reflects their experience of being disenfranchised? Gemma herself recalled her teaching style where she repeated the same old stuff over and over again, from one year to the next. Would Gemma's original approach reflect the expectations of children who felt disenfranchised?



When we repeat the same old familiar stuff that we have already lost connection with. It is no longer exciting. We are not connected with our own material, or with ourselves anymore, and we wonder why our students are not excited or inspired. We forget ourselves, and what excited us in the first place, and yet we still expect the children to know it.

Can we learn deeply together when we set things up with a ‘knower’ and the ‘ones who are yet to know’? Is our old way based on having a knower who imparts information to the ones who are yet to know, until they know enough? Do they (the ones who are yet to know) then show us they know enough to satisfy the knower that their job is done?

Is the traditional, basics-as-breakdown model of teaching really teaching? Is this practice, rather, an information exchange that satisfies an 18<sup>th</sup> century factory-style industrial model of education to produce standardised predictable outcomes about who knows what (Jardine, 2008; Robinson, 2001; Sumara, 1996)? Gemma said,

We have to get to know the child on a deeper level to be really able to connect and help them to be inspired, and to give them the confidence to try something they’re not feeling that confident about. I think doing the breathwork helped me know myself better. This radically affected everything about my life. It has influenced my life on every level by having a deeper understanding of me.

I’ve remembered about the magic of having all those kids in a circle. They each shared something about themselves using a symbol to describe what was special to them at *Think Tank*. It was that level of acceptance that allowed us to celebrate each individual. The inclusivity of it helped to give kids who’d never say anything that gave them the confidence or permission to express themselves.

There were so many people — teachers, Aboriginal children, and parents in that circle — and we loved it. It was incredible what we heard. It really did deepen our understanding. They had amazing permission to speak from their hearts.

Gemma talked about the activities we did in *Changing Places* that challenged her and encouraged her to take more risks in her classroom.

Sometimes my thinking was challenged. I suddenly thought of when we went to Maria Island, when we went over and we did the bag activity, 'Who's Bag was it?' That challenged my preconceptions about people, and children, and sexism. It really made me think, and that challenges my own assumptions. We, as teachers, get isolated from each other. We don't get to see how others are teaching and what they're doing. In this program we came together, we trialled stuff and we came back and shared it. It's the sharing — it was so helpful to see what everyone did with any one activity and how different it was, we did learn so much from each other.

The bag I provided for the 'Who's Bag was it?' exercise that Gemma referred to was deliberately ambiguous. It appeared to be a student's school bag that contained a variety of things. The people at the workshop were asked to examine the bag and its contents before telling me whom they thought may own the bag, and what they thought their age, gender, ethnicity and interests might be. They were to examine the evidence as if they were historians, and phenomenologists, and look at the things themselves to give them clues about the lifeworld of the owner of the bag. What does the bag tell us about its owner? Gemma discovered that her assumptions 'coloured' her view of the evidence before her. She drew conclusions from what she expected to find based on what she called her 'preconceptions'. Most people in the group assumed that the bag belonged to a teen-age boy whose interests were football and cars. To the group's surprise the bag belonged to an eight-year-old Aboriginal girl with a vivid imagination. She loved to collect toys and figurines that she carried around with her that provided props for her imaginary games and role-play that she did during her recess breaks at school. There were few clues in the bag to suggest that she was Aboriginal. Can we recognise a person's ethnicity and gender from the things they carry around with them in their bags? By doing the task Gemma and the others in her group realised that rather than looking at what was before them and posing possibilities of who may have owned the bag, they jumped to conclusions about what they thought they knew about people and their belongings.

Gemma talked about her changed approach to multi-genre writing. She had moved away from teaching writing for the sake of it in order to skim across the various subjects in the curriculum. She had become aware that

children could learn more by “Getting into the character of a historical person, to speak from their perspective, rather than covering a vast array of stuff they’ve got to learn for their grade level.”

I think that somehow just by thinking deeply about that one person, thinking about all the influences in their life, thinking about their life from birth through to death and the impacts they’ve had helps the kids to get involved. And with the migration museum that we did, they also had to think about symbols of their character’s life before migration. Where they’ve come from and what they’ve done in their life that’s been good for our society. It might be that it’s just the job they did, or they had children, or whatever, but thinking deeply about that one character, it does the job somehow of getting the kids engaged. When we did early Tasmanian and Australian history, when they could make connections between their character and another character, they said to each other “I was on your boat,” “I came out on your boat, I was the botanist.” So they did learn a lot about each other’s characters and that came from *Changing Places*.

Gemma speculated,

And what about the qualities of a person? I have read somewhere that in the future it’s not what you know, but how we all work in together that’s important. We need to be more creative to deal with the work challenges of the future. We need to spark off each other and come up with new concepts, or whatever. It’s a different focus, not based on information we have, but how to find the information. That’s minimal really because with the information technology we have, it’s easy to find the information. Our future could be about knowing how to deeply look at something and how to work together to understand something.

Was Gemma recognising that our intelligence could be based on our principles of cooperation, relation, commitment, participation, interdependence, belonging, desire, conversation, memory, place, tradition, discipline, and care, that becomes group intelligence, as we saw demonstrated in the bee colony (Jardine, Clifford & Friesen, 2008)?

Gemma’s children learned from one another, as they became experts in their field that they could then share with one another. They did not need to learn about every historical character, they could learn from each other through their art of relating their characters through the events in their lives.

Inter-dependence is about developing that sense of community and how important that is. And children's family — parents, siblings — are all part of their learning, and acknowledging they are important to their learning and involving them in their education.

The other thing we learned in our workshops was how to develop a sense of place. We discovered how it was so important for our stability and sense of security. We understood where each of us came from and how we fitted in the larger picture of the school system and our lives — we were no longer alone and separate.

That's what I've tried to do the hardest since doing these programs, I think, is to build relationships with the students and to give of myself as fully as I can, to share myself.

They love to watch us cry if we're reading something sad. They watch our eyes, and then they cry.

Self-reflection is excellent really, to encourage our children to reflect on their learning.

One of the things I've changed most is to encourage children to take responsibility by teaching them how to learn and how to feel comfortable to learn. We can hand responsibility for their learning to them because they are the only ones who can do it. They have to ask, "Why am I learning this?" Our responsibility is to show them meaningful ways to answer their questions. They get enthusiastic about learning.

We used the ideas learned at the workshops through the *As I Remember* resource, where Aboriginal Elders told us their stories. The Elders gave us pearls of wisdom. We went back to our school and involved the whole school in finding pearls in their own community. The children were asked to go out and gather pearls from their families, and relatives. The families really responded. The children showed honour to their families, giving them opportunities to express things that were important to them. Everyone was included.

The children took charge of their own learning by going out into their communities to find out about the people they shared their lives with. They visited, photographed, and interviewed people around them. Were they creating portraits of and for their families and communities? As Gemma pointed out, "We were no longer alone and separate." Gemma was

relinquishing control, she took risks with her teaching and encouraged her students to become involved and responsible. According to van Manen, if we are willing to relinquish control we may enter a realm of uncertainty that poses more questions than answers in our quest to understand ourselves as teachers.

Teaching can be a complex enterprise when teachers challenge the students to think independently and critically about their learning. Teaching can be risky for teachers who are willing to make themselves vulnerable by engaging students in activities that are not always predictable and controllable. Any “true teaching” moment can pose innumerable questions to the teacher. (van Manen, 2008, p.1)

*Gumnuts to Buttons* and *As I Remember* are teaching resources we developed with Aboriginal people to assist them to tell their stories as they wished them to be told. We used both of these resources in our professional learning programs with the help and guidance of the Aboriginal Elders. The Elders got to know the teachers and parents and actively encouraged them to use the resources with confidence.

We brought the Aboriginal history role-play to the school — *Gumnuts to Buttons: a Walk Through Tasmanian History from an Aboriginal Perspective*. Any child, who participated in *Gumnuts to Buttons*, suddenly, develops this awareness with what’s happened in our colonial history and the impact that has had on the Aboriginal people of this island.

Gemma concludes our conversation by acknowledging that by letting go of control, she had most of all developed her ability to listen to children. Her participation in the workshops had changed the way she relates to others pedagogically. She said, “You always had the time to listen to us — every one of us felt heard and cared for and honoured. I want to do what you were doing for us for all the kids in my classes.”

I think what I want in life is a deep connection with everyone around me, and that’s what I want for kids too, a deeper connection with everything — with the kids themselves, and with the way they learn. It has to be real.

Reflecting on the portrait of Gemma I have now placed before us, I can see that she had somehow found a deep connection with what is real, and

experienced what is real and authentic, through her transformative work and her exploration of selfhood.

### **A pedagogic moment of self-reflection**

Sarah told Gemma and me how her teaching had changed forever once she embarked on personal transformational work. She said,

I hope I have internalised this transformation for myself before I can influence anyone else. I think that my empathy and understanding of difference and culture and my humanness has developed for myself. I have infused that understanding into my classroom practice to help my kids.

It is a complex enterprise when we challenge students to think independently. How much more complex does it become for us when we challenge one another to do the same, and to take risks and be vulnerable, in our professional learning programs? Some of Sarah's personal challenges became evident, as she described,

There were quite a few things that we did that would've completely freaked me out normally. There's no way I would have done all those personal development activities if I didn't feel that anything I did was okay.

What was normal for Sarah and how did things differ in this workshop that made it safe for her? "What was it that made me feel this way?" Sarah asked. She agreed with Gemma and said,

I felt accepted and that I belonged. It was very empowering and I was completely re-invigorated and re-inspired. We were all learners, it was really powerful and it created excitement amongst the whole professional learning group. We have got to give that to the kids in our class.

Was this the first time Sarah had felt accepted and respected? Had she developed enough confidence in herself to take more risks than usual? What helped her to take up the baton to extend herself for her and her students?

I hope I have become less judgmental. I love meeting people who are really surprising, who are unexpected, who are different to what they might appear to be. I think it's that human difference that I embrace rather than being sceptical or fearful. I hope I embrace and celebrate the people I meet in every aspect of my life.

How often we make judgments about people, and how often we are wrong!

### What keeps us passionate about teaching?

One of the really wonderful things we did was to connect with kids' passions. We were really connecting with what kids feel deeply about and how they connect to the real world. It's always surprising, that kids feel so deeply about all sorts of incredible things that we would never ever know about if we didn't work this way.

We would never tap into such a rich field of children's experience. Kids felt they could really achieve when they felt comfortable. They get freedom when they don't have to do a set task in a set way.

Sarah loved the maths. Her children told her "I never used to like maths and I could never do it before" and asked, "Can we do those maths investigations again today?" She delighted in telling us the children were learning to reflect and report on their work, and to become mathematicians. It had all changed for the better — the children were confident and curious.

Did Sarah change her teaching when she, once more, became engaged as a learner? Did she, with us, become like mathematical investigators who learn to reflect on the process of working like mathematicians (Davis & Sumara, 2000)? Could she then teach her children to do the same? She gave up on setting problems that elicited right and wrong answers, a method which prevailed in so much maths teaching. What became a *teacher* to her then? Was it that a *real* teacher was one who was willing to investigate, take risks, and be confident, vulnerable and inspiring?

Her students reported getting switched on, developing confidence and recognising that they could be good at their schoolwork. The students were enthusiastic and initiated doing their own self-paced inquiry in tackling maths projects. Sarah asked her students to reflect on their learning, demonstrating an advanced process of thinking (*Project Zero*, Harvard University). The students summarised their learning by reporting on their feelings, achievements, challenges, and areas of strength, weakness and skill acquisition. They reported on how they tackled the challenges put to them

in the open-ended mathematical tasks. They demonstrated and reported on their learning using higher order thinking.

For Sarah, being a real teacher became a far cry from the traditional question and answer maths courses that we find in grade books. This was not to be drill and practice, closed question exercises with answers conveniently published at the back of the book. Together we're asking questions like, does our passion for teaching re-ignite when children discover their passions? Is passion pedagogically good?

It helped me realise how often we can underestimate kids and what they're capable of, and the deep level thinking kids are capable of doing. I'm thinking about the philosophy sessions when kids were so courageous in speaking in front of an audience. These young people felt confident and courageous enough, to speak up and say what they thought. They knew that they weren't going to be shot down in flames, that whatever they said was acceptable. What they said was valued. It never ceased to amaze me what they would come up with.

Kids touched on things that a lot of parents and teachers had been afraid to discuss. They mentioned deeply held fears that they had that they wanted to talk about and share their opinions. They needed that safe environment and the relationships with all of us to trust and go that deeply. They had an opportunity and an avenue to vent and speak aloud. It is stuff that kids think about, and worry about, and are fearful about. Do those fears lessen when they can speak them out loud?

Are we passionate when our related encounters with our students, our interconnected world, and ourselves are real and embodied within our lived experience?

### **Who is the self that teaches?**

The people in our project based their inquiry on "Who is the self that teaches?" We embarked on a "seldom-taken trail in the quest for educational reform." Palmer urges us to address recovering our inner resources, that good teaching always requires us to act, openly and honestly, and to work towards enhancing our own wellbeing. Palmer invites us to, "Let education bring more light and life to the world." (1998, p.7) As we



teach, we project the condition of our souls onto those around us and onto to our very way of being together. Palmer suggests that our teaching experience, if viewed from such an angle, holds a mirror to the soul and that self-knowledge is the key to knowing our students and subject matter, that we “teach who we are” (Palmer, 1998, p.1). My challenge to make a difference to Aboriginal students’ lives, would involve us exploring our selfhood.

I asked Sarah how her connection with the children developed once she began her self-exploration.

When I first joined the program, I was really overwhelmed by a sense of belonging and acceptance and respect. Everyone had such deep respect for each other as teachers and learners, and it really did feel like I belonged and was a part of that group. It created for me an excitement about learning. And for me, I think that deeply changed how I have taught ever since, because it made me realise how important it is to establish relationships with kids. Once I make a connection with a child who’s not really inspired to learn in a classroom — once I make that connection, everything is easier from that point on for that child as a learner, and me as a teacher. For me, it was a deeply empowering realisation and I really think there was a lot of excitement in that everyone felt very accepted at the workshops, so I could learn about myself, and that made a huge difference.

Acceptance is the process of being received, as being adequate, valid and suitable. To be accepted is to be welcomed, embraced, and approved of, and to be integrated into a group. To have respect for a person is to demonstrate the concept that all people deserve the right to fully exercise their autonomy. Showing respect for people is an interactive system whereby ones showing respect ensure that others have agency to exercise choice.

Sarah was willing to learn in this context. Had this been an unusual experience for her? Had the majority of her professional contacts in her teaching career failed to support her to feel respected and accepted, or that she belonged? It was everyone in the program that showed respect and acceptance for each other. There was a culture of acceptance and respect that invited a sense of belonging for participants. Sarah was free to be a

learner whilst maintaining her identity as a teacher. She was both a teacher and learner. Sarah was so deeply changed by her experiences that it became a priority for her to get to know her students and to establish relationships and connections with them. She says, “So many of those experiences in the program changed my teaching forever.” She created a classroom culture of mutual respect, acceptance, passion and intentionality that invited a sense of belonging and purpose for all involved.

### Culturally responsive practice

Aboriginal Elders joined our *Changing Places* community. We were curious to learn from them and to embrace their way of viewing the world. We accepted each other as having our unique identities. Sarah said,

I loved the hands-on connecting work we did with the Aboriginal Elders. And, again, I felt confident because we felt so comfortable with each other, and we were made to feel so comfortable with them, I felt empowered and confident to give things a go that normally would've been way out of my comfort zone.

Why would ‘giving things a go’ around Aboriginal Elders have been ‘way out of the comfort zone’ of an experienced and competent teacher? Teachers have been heavily criticised by some Aboriginal people for attempting to include issues relating to Tasmania’s Aboriginal history and culture in their teaching programs. There has been much mistrust and misunderstanding between Tasmania’s Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities. This mistrust has led to many teachers choosing to omit addressing such issues in their classes. Teachers are fearful of making mistakes, or offending Aboriginal people through their own perceived ignorance. The Elders were willing to share their cultural knowledge and encouraged teachers to give things a go in their classes.

I think we learned from the Elders, and that idea that knowledge is power for us to get along together. We are so much stronger if we support and celebrate each other. The more that we found out, the more empathy we developed for the plight of Aboriginal people and other Indigenous people in the world. Really, as educators, that’s one of the things I hope that kids come

to develop—empathy and becoming decent human beings, and citizens of the world.

Was Sarah's developing relationship with the Elders helping her to feel confident and empowered? Was connectedness and relatedness a key to her losing her fear of ignorance and fear of offending? Was it richer for her to teach sensitive cross-cultural issues once we had an understanding of another's culture and worldview? Can we together earn the blessings of the Elders to teach those issues with confidence and inside knowledge and appreciation?

I think it really changed my way of looking at kids and my way of working in the classroom a lot. It took away my fear because before that I'd shy away from teaching Aboriginal Education, because I was too afraid of doing the wrong thing. And it was that knowledge and confidence, and touching base and finding out that these Aboriginal people aren't scary. They're just like us. It comes back to basic teaching respect for others and that empathy.

We also did work with the kit, *As I Remember*, where the Aboriginal Elders talked about their lives. We took some ideas from the stories the Aboriginal people told us about their lives and decided to interview people from the children's community. We were given disposable cameras for the children to take home and we asked them to interview someone they were connected to. The people were asked to find symbols of their lives and the children got to take the photos of them in their chosen special place. That was fantastic and the kids all wanted to do it, and they wanted to get their camera license so they could take the camera home. We decided to have a day where we invited all those people who'd been interviewed to come to the school and have a special presentation to thank them for being involved. And someone said, "They will never come. Parents don't come into our school, they never come into our school."

We asked our kids to write instructional texts, so they wrote recipes. One of them had a picture of a cow because their dad was a butcher, so we decided to cook some of their recipes and put on an afternoon tea as well. Well, the classroom was absolutely crowded out; it was packed, and it was a huge classroom. It was not just the person that was interviewed, but other members of their family as well, and all of the children presented a piece from the multi-genre tasks that they'd done; the books they'd made about the person. And when I looked at the person who was being interviewed as that child was

reading something about them, it was one of the highlights for me, and something I'll always remember. There was this beautiful old man sitting there with half a leg and the tears were streaming down his face as his granddaughter read a poem that she'd written about him. It was so beautiful. It was so wonderful to have all those people come together and to celebrate their lives and who they were. It was just gorgeous.

Parents did come to their school on that day. Did they come feeling safe and valued, to hear their own stories, and to pick up on the passion and enthusiasm of their children? Did they come to share the food they had already become involved in preparing? Had they already read the recipes the children had written? Had the children's work as they painted it for their families touched a sacred chord?

The things we did in the *Changing Places* program gave me the confidence to teach Aboriginal Education. I was too afraid to touch it before in case I offended someone. I think the empathy we developed with each other, and with the kids we taught, was one of the most valuable things that came out of the various programs.

I asked Sarah how her ways of understanding and knowing may have changed over the years we had worked together,

I'd like to think that I'm a better person. I'd like to think that along with all those things I learnt in the programs, that had the potential to be transformational, had been transformational for me. I hope I have internalised all this for myself so I influence others. I'd like to think that my empathy and understanding of difference and culture, and I guess my humanness has developed, as well, for myself. I hope I can infuse all I have become to change my classroom practice, to help my kids.

We learned from Buber in Chapter 6, as Sarah commented, a person lives *with* the world rather than *in* it. Sarah was discovering through her reflection that her transformation involved changing from an individual to a person. This transformational work is how we become real teachers.

I really love that in the program we always had a sense of playfulness and fun. I worry that with our new curriculum we are so outcomes driven and the program is so full. I wonder if we still have time to have fun. We're so concerned about getting through the program and doing the work, that in order to do that you can't really strictly do it without losing some depth of

understanding because we only have time to brush over some stuff at least. So what is the cost? We're so driven; that my fear is — and I know that I do it — we get bogged down and lose that sense of fun and playfulness. And that is what we should be trying to never lose, that ability to capture and excite kids and making it a fun place to be, and for them to want to come to school and learn. And we want to go to school. And we want to be part of that process. Without being an inspired teacher, it's really a difficult job.

Is a teacher inspired and inspiring? Can we be fun to be around, and have fun? If *we* want to be at school does it follow that the kids also want to be there with us?

That deeper thinking and deeper understanding, it's the building of relationships, the relationships that we built up with each other, we had such a deep connection with that group of people that it felt like coming home when we met in those groups. And there was a deep underlying feeling that we were really valued, and in the education system, that's a rarity. To me, that's the essence of teaching, and of working with kids, transferring to them that I deeply value what they have to offer, no matter how poorly they might see themselves. And the workshops that we did were all built on that underlying value of respecting what we did. And because of that respect we had such positive relationships with each other.

The themes emerging through Sarah and Gemma's portraits of transforming are relationships, belonging, homecoming, risk-taking, responsibility and deep thinking. As Sarah said,

For me, that's the other vital thing we have to pass on to kids, not necessarily how many facts or whether they can remember what year the First Fleet arrived in Australia. I don't know if that's going to be of much value to them in their adult lives or when they're out in the workplace looking for work. I know when we owned a restaurant and were hiring people, it wasn't about how clever that person was, but about how they behaved towards others and whether that person could be a team player. Those are the things that will ensure that kids will grow up and have a good life, and be valued, contributing people in our society. It's those relationships — those core values of humanity really that we were given in those programs. You were the person, Vicky that created that environment, and having other people like you as our models empowers us to go back to the classroom and in our own lives to try to emulate that. It's that deep basic respect for each other, and for our

differences without judging, and celebrating people for who they are, and we all have a right to be here, and are valued.

Can we be clever without being related and connected? Is there an assumption in Western schooling that we value ‘cleverness’ over people’s capacity to be connected contributors in and with our society?

Teachers are isolated from each other because we’re in our classrooms all day and we don’t get to see how others are teaching and what they’re doing. At *Changing Places* we came together and we learnt from fantastic teachers, then we trialled it and we came back and shared it. It’s the sharing, it was so helpful seeing what everyone did with any one activity and how different it was, and we learned so much from each other.

We had the luxury of time that we had in those workshops. It really made us think, and I’m guilty of doing it, of the many times in a classroom that we rush kids. We don’t allow kids the time to process information and we don’t allow the time for the various ways they need to figure something out and do it, or to play and try new ways. And that’s one of the things we really appreciated in *Changing Places*, we had time to process stuff. It’s that reflective time — meta-cognitive learning or whatever you call it — that’s often where deep understanding comes from. That was built into those programs.

A lot of the research now suggests that the single most important factor in kids’ learning is the teacher and the relationship with the teacher. So all of those things like collaborative planning that we’re slowly moving towards in Tasmania, it still makes only a marginally significant difference. The research has proven that it’s still the teacher, the relationship we build with the kids; that is the biggest factor. It’s important to let kids know that we’re human, and that we’re all learners; and that we’re not perfect.

The teacher, the relationship we build with the kids, and the recognition that we are all imperfect learners are valuable insights about how we can be real, imperfect, teachers. Do we assume we have to be perfect in order to teach? Do we need to know facts to pass them on to others? Does perfect refer to how much we know? Are we labouring under a burden of fear of not knowing enough, insecurity, imperfection and isolation if we maintain the myth of knowing much so that we can pass on information? Are we held hostage to our positivist, quantitative, values that are measurable?

Teachers tend to always know and want to always be right, and say to the kids, "You've got to guess the answer I've got in my head." It's the outcome driven stuff rather than really acknowledging the thinking. And again, it comes back to giving kids time to really think deeply too and I think our system discourages that, it doesn't have time built into it for self-reflecting and processing information and concepts.

If it's the case that the most significant factor is the teacher and the relationship we build with the students, then isn't it wise that that's where we should be investing our money and resources, into developing our relationship skills, and then from that perspective, supporting kids to do the same. We need to develop a sense of community among teachers. By allowing us to be human and for kids to see that we are human and connected.

Sarah reiterated what Gemma talked about and told us what she discovered about how and what her students learned when they took responsibility and risks when to understand the landscape of their wider community.

What we built into that practice was the opportunity we gave them to work with other kids in different groups, and the whole school community thing, and interviewing people, and all those things. There's a lot of learning involved in that and how we learn to relate to different people, and how to speak to different people, and all of those social skills we learn in those different contexts. And how we modify our language according to different situations: how we speak in the playground maybe isn't appropriate to how we would speak with our grandma. So it's not only reflecting on our learning and what we're taking in, but on our relationships and how we operate within groups. And back to those basic values of respecting others and respecting their opinions, of letting kids know that it is okay if I have a different opinion. I think that's really important.

Sarah talked of the community as if she were embedded in inquiry as much as her students. She referred to "our relationships", and how we modified "our language" when we talked to different people. She was as involved as the students in an I/Thou relationship. She was a person, and a teacher, relating with her world.

Life is messy, and therefore learning should also be messy. We don't actually learn in a mechanistic, step-by-step way. Often our learning — what we describe as 'A-Ha moments' — aren't necessarily found in that mechanistic way of thinking. That it's a whole lot of different factors, most of them about intrinsic things like the sense of belonging, and being comfortable, secure and interconnected, that you can actually open your mind and take in new things. That's when I think a lot of our learning occurs and it's kind of a jumbled up circumstance that it occurs in. It's not necessarily step-by-step that creates those 'A-Ha moments'. I think back to that time when, during the philosophy section, when kids disagreed with one boy in particular and he took off and just could not handle it at all. He just could not cope with anyone having a different opinion to him. And on the way out he pulled out all of the tubs and threw them on the floor, and kicked bags, and raced off and was going to get Chopper Reid onto them (because his dad was in prison with him, Chopper). It's those essential skills for living, really, to be able to accept difference and that it's okay for people to have a different opinion or a different way of being to you. That acceptance, that unless we can accept difference and celebrate it, and cherish it I suppose, it's really difficult for us to impart that to kids in our care.

I can remember thinking when I was in high school and I was in Grade 7. I was in science class. We had a pretty terrifying science teacher who used to throw chalk if we were not paying attention. So I sat right in the back — everyone wanted to sit right at the back but it was like first in, first served — and I developed this face where to all intents and purposes, I looked like I was taking everything in. I was completely frozen, my brain was completely shut down in fear and I didn't learn anything. It's like that basic brain research about fight or flight, when you're in panic mode, or stage fright or anything; the medulla shuts down so thoughts can't get to the processing part of your brain, so it's fight or flight. If I can't fight and I can't figure out how to run then I just shut down. To me, that's the most horrifying thought that any kids in my care would be like that. That's when I think the Old School way, 'I'm the teacher and you will listen and you will learn. Sit down you gormless idiot and listen to the pearls of wisdom I'm casting you,' is all I learnt from doing four years of German, which is another example, because he was terrifying. And he used to call me a gormless idiot if I didn't get something right. And that's all that I remember of four years of German. Again, it comes back to being real, and being human, and creating a learning environment where kids feel free to



express their opinions, and to take information in on a very basic, organic level.

I think, too, it's that bothering to get to know kids, taking that time and finding out what makes them tick. Finding out what they are passionate about and making that connection. That is so important. That can turn kids around. I think back to different kids that we've taught, there's nothing we can teach them until we've established some sort of rapport.

Kids are pretty clever about picking up what's fake and what's real, and if you genuinely care about them they do understand that, they *get it* on some level, even if it's not really cool to show it. It makes all the difference.

Sarah's portrait hanging side by side with Gemma's seems to amplify insight into the risks and rewards that journeying into self-awareness, and opening oneself to possibilities for self-transforming, promise. As Gadamer says, "All understanding is self-understanding" (1977, p.55). If teachers risk and practise self-understanding, might we expect that the children they teach might risk and practise in similar ways and form, reform and transform? Their teachers' enthusiasm is palpable and infectious. Their teachers' portraits are *dative*.

### **Portrait of myself as teacher**

*kutalayna: a case study of multiple perspectives*, a video of a class lesson, is a portrait of a class, a community, of Aboriginal people working in class, and of me, a teacher. The video clip, Figure 2 below, is a representation that displays the likeness, personality and mood of the subjects. My interpretive description is self-portrait. Can I represent the likeness, personality and mood of my self as teacher?

The video is available on *Vimeo*, (2015) and was made some months ago. It portrays a class lesson in which we explore a contentious local issue. Brighton is a very small town north of Hobart. Until recently all the northbound traffic from Hobart went through its main street. Most of the towns and transport hubs in Tasmania lie north of Hobart making the town crowded and congested. Plans have been afoot for many years to build a bypass, which has since been built. The most cost effective and convenient

place to build the bypass ran right through a section of land that is of great historic and spiritual significance, particularly for Aboriginal people. It contains numerous ancient artefacts and evidence of ancient land use. Aboriginal people argue that its significance is equal to that of stone circles, caves and long barrows that we find in parts of Europe. The purpose of the lesson was to give the students an opportunity to explore conflicting points of view that so often emerge in diverse communities. They were to role-play how it would be for different people in the community. Some played the role of the local government, who wanted the road built, and others were the protesting Aborigines. Some were the shopkeepers and residents of Brighton, and others played the role of arresting police officers. The students worked in groups and were given large sheets of paper to draw the scene of Brighton and its proposed bypass. They each got given a character to play and were invited to choose from a collection of symbols to find one that best represented their character. Each group of six students, who all had different characters, acted out the scenario to explore what they imagined would be the reactions and points of view of the characters.

The whole class was involved — they used drawings, maps, puppets, symbols and each other to tell a story about their own community from different perspectives. They jumped into different roles to tell different stories. They asked the land to speak to them by writing a culminating poem from the land's perspective after acting out the scenario. Neil, an Aboriginal man had been there at the scene a few years earlier. He had been arrested for his involvement in the blockade to save his precious land. He tells us in the film that he was angry to begin with, and then proud of himself. Why was he angry? He told us that it brought back painful memories for him. Was he also angry because of the way I introduced the story? Neil told me after the lesson that he had felt so strongly about protesting about the bypass that he had given up his job to move nearer the site. He told me he had not expected the lesson to be presented in such a way that allowed the children to draw their own conclusions about what should have happened to the bypass.

What did Neil want to hear? How did he feel when the children began to explore the issues? Was he angry because he expected *me* to tell the story as

a factual event to elicit a single and correct response from the class? What made him proud by the end of the exercise? Was it because he could allow space for the students to think for themselves? Do we learn when we have such space to think for ourselves? Do we learn about the impact of historical events by being told how to respond? Neil realised that the students were not puppets. He identified that we can't tell them how they should think. What can we learn about pedagogy from this class of students? Neil said he arrived in class intending to tell the children how they should think about the issue. He realised that when children direct their own inquiry he was surprised at the empathy and connectedness they showed towards the plight of Aboriginal people who had lost their sacred land. Had Neil shifted his understanding of pedagogy? Did Neil appreciate that in encouraging students to think for themselves we practise pedagogic freedom? Was there room in the class for Neil's confusion, anger, and eventual wonder, as he witnessed the children's responses to the dilemma we put to them?

This video offers me an opportunity to stand back in a transcendental attitude (Sokolowski, 2000), or in a place at a distance to myself in a kind of Gadamerian sense of distancing (1989), and create a self-portrait through contemplative inquiry. I watch the video and see that I listened, responded and was present to the class. My body language tells me I was present. I watched and listened and was engaged as each group acted out their scenes and told their stories. I was confident in setting the scene, and handing over the action to the students and other members of our project. We were engaged in a community inquiry. There were no right answers it seemed and the inquiry was inconclusive. The students did not appear to be steered towards any conclusion. Did Neil expect that to happen when we embarked on the inquiry? Did Neil's observation that children are not puppets bear witness to his realisation that there was a place for genuine unbiased inquiry in classrooms? We explored together the implications of careless and thoughtless planning and progress. We found out that human actions have consequences for other people. The Aboriginal people lost their sacred land when the bypass was built right over it. They, and the land, grieved its loss. The trucks and commuter traffic roll over the land on the new bypass. Is

there any thought for what lies below? What is the cost of inconsiderate planning and inexorable progress? Will the students think differently next time we need a bypass? Will Neil and his people always be lone voices to speak up for what is precious and in danger of being subsumed? Can our young people develop aware citizenship through role-play and exploration of an issue as a class inquiry?

I cannot teach without having someone to teach, people to teach with, or something to orient my teaching towards. A self-portrait is already a portrait of community. In the video clip the children were involved in a community inquiry. They took on different roles to explore a contentious local issue asking, “Who was affected by the building of a bypass?” “Should the bypass have been built?” and, “What could the land tell us about development that adversely affects Aboriginal people’s sacred places?”

Like Sarah, I was having fun. I was teacher, facilitator and participant. I watch the video and see that I take a place at the back of the group of students and listen. I smile at their jokes and engaging storytelling and role-play. Do we all belong to the class and to one another? It seems so. Are the children respected for portraying their character? Do they have room to draw their own conclusions? Does it matter if we remain inconclusive by the end of the lesson? How does our community live with conflict and differing views? Do Aboriginal people have a voice in our wider community? Could the bypass have been built in a different place? Would we as a community been prepared to pay for the extra cost of re-routing the bypass? Will today’s children become aware of different perspectives as they grapple with future community dilemmas as adults?

I come to see from the vantage of transcendental contemplative inquiry about this video that I was practising pedagogical tact through the interactive nature of my teaching. van Manen says, “The interactive nature of teaching and the kind of knowledge used in this action resembles a type of experience...we call pedagogical tact” (2008, p.13). In tact, we move towards wholeness when we are living, learning, exploring, and describing a world where we know in community, and think the world together for the pedagogic good. My self-portrait is a portrait of tact and is indistinguishable from a portrait of community in learning.



*Figure 2. Self-portrait as portrait of community clipped from kotalayna: A case study of multiple perspectives*

### **Transcending from I/It to I/Thou**

In the final chapter I will bring the threads together of the stories I have told in this thesis. I pick up the themes that have emerged from hermeneutics and our lifeworlds. To know the world is to be the world, to be a person we have to be with the world. I will explore how the threads, themes and stories themselves teach me to live my thesis.

## CHAPTER 8

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# I RESPOND WITH MY WHOLE BEING TO YOU

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“The real journey of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes.” Marcel Proust

### **Interpretive: Interpretation is pedagogic at its heart**

Aboriginal women of Tasmania continue practising their culture through weaving baskets from plant fibres, as their ancestors have done for thousands of years. They call it *tayenebe*: weaving our stories (2009).

The baskets are not empty.

They are full of makers, their stories,  
their thoughts while making.

The baskets are never empty.

All of the thoughts jump out of the baskets  
onto all of us.

(Verna Nichols, Aboriginal Basket Maker)

The interweaving of our stories in this thesis takes form and comes together diachronically, across and through time to contribute to the vessel that becomes the Whole, like the baskets of the Aboriginal women. Jardine (1992) tells us, “Bringing out these living interweavings in their full, ambiguous, multivocal character is the task of interpretation”(p.52). Interpretation, says Jardine, is concerned with generativity of meaning, and pedagogy is concerned with the regeneration of understanding. He says, “It is not simply that pedagogy can be one of the themes of interpretive inquiry. Rather interpretation is pedagogic at its heart” (p.52). My hope is that my interpretation of pedagogic moments sheds light on our lives as

pedagogic beings whose self-transcendent journeys lead us towards being, becoming, and belonging to a universe that is already whole.

Hope is pedagogical only when it has been born and has grown in the fertile ground of relationship. Indeed, it is the hope born upon the banks of the deep waters of human hope that runs abundantly through the deepest hollows of our being. Human hope “allows life to take the form of a process steadily moving towards the future.” (Bollnow, 1961, p. 3 in Jardine, 2014, p.22)

Hope is a pedagogical theme that emerges throughout this thesis. Human hope allows our life to move us towards the future, and towards becoming whole, as all life unfolds to its intended potential. We discover that to be pedagogic is to act with hope, love, passion, and heart.

### **The Hero's return**

As with the Hero in the Hero's journey, I have ventured forth into the darkness of the unknown, been initiated, tested, and called to reveal my true character. I now return home carrying the boon of my quest for the benefit of my community.

In this final chapter I bring back the living interweavings of our stories and find themes that emerge through my writing. I pay attention to the phenomenological, hermeneutic, and Buddhist turns I have made throughout this thesis that Bentz and Shapiro refer to as “mindful inquiry” (1998, p.52). An attitude of mindful inquiry “allows the Beings of the participants of the study to shine forward to reveal themselves to the inquirer” (p.54). It is my sincere hope that this inquiry is “full of the makers and their stories,” as it was with the never-empty baskets of the Aboriginal women. Do our thoughts, lives, and stories “jump out of the baskets onto all of us” and inspire us to *know* the world, and therefore to *be* the world, together? Mindful inquiry, as we explored in Chapter 2, is conscious inquiry. In order to be mindful, we participate in Mind and think the world together. A self-inquiry becomes an inquiry of Self.

Sharon Todd tells us in *'Bringing more than I contain': ethics, curriculum, and the pedagogical demands for altered egos* that teaching and learning is an ethical relationship because distinct beings come face to face in encounters where

change of Self and Other is inevitable. Teaching, she says is about “staging an encounter with the Other, with something outside the Self, whereas learning is to receive from the Other more than the Self already holds” (2001, p.437). She cites Emmanuel Levinas,

It is...to receive from the Other beyond the capacity of the I, which means exactly: to have the idea of infinity. But this also means to be taught. The relation with the Other, or Conversation, is...an ethical relation; but inasmuch as it is welcomed this conversation is a teaching [*enseignement*]. Teaching is not reducible to maieutics; it comes from the exterior and brings me more than I contain. (1961, p. 51)

Teaching is more than bringing what might lie latent within a person into clear consciousness. Todd points out that pedagogical encounters between Self and Other, and the process of “learning to become” inevitably involves “uncertainty of meaning”. She suggests, “responsiveness to the Other can counter the harm wrought by pedagogy’s own demands for alteration” (2001, p.446). The Self changes on encountering Other. Are we not compelled by virtue of our roles as teachers, who “bring more than I contain” to be responsible and responsive?

In Todd’s acknowledgement, Levinas urges us to have an idea of infinity. As we have explored in this inquiry, notions of Self and Mind are infinite. The axiology that emerges from pedagogy demands that, I, an emerging person who lives and relates as I/Thou has a moral imperative to be responsive as I accept that I “bring more than I contain” to each pedagogic moment. I respond with my whole Being to You.

### **Responsive: Toward a transformationist pedagogy**

Being responsive is to react quickly and positively. When we are responsive, we are receptive, flexible, and open to suggestions. We are accessible, approachable, forthcoming, sensitive, perceptive, sympathetic, well disposed, susceptible, open, alive, awake and aware. Such qualities and dispositions allow us to respond positively to the dimensions of others, and the inner and outer landscapes of ourselves.



Once we practise responsiveness, and approach our world with openness, awareness, curiosity and wonder we have prepared the ground to understand otherness as we understand ourselves. To be responsive is to act with hope, love, passion, and heart.

Gary Howard in his paper *Dispositions For Good Teaching*, reiterates, “our personhood, as well as our professional practice, is intimately connected to the quality of our students’ experience” and asks us to examine whether we “have the capacity and flexibility to be with (our) students in an authentic and effective way” (2007, p.1).

Howard (2007, p.134) provides a model that synthesises pedagogic principles, which, when applied together, offers a path towards becoming culturally responsive. He presents this as an “achievement triangle”. See Figure 3 below,

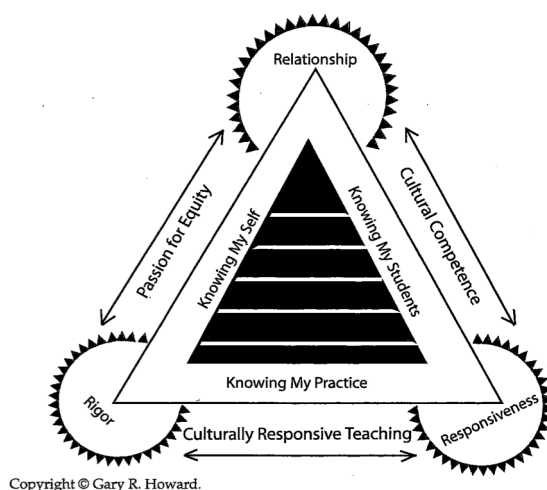


Figure 3. *Achievement triangle: Transformationist pedagogy*

Howard’s work challenges teachers from dominant cultures to include and relate to cultural minorities in the United States of America. He calls it multi-cultural education. My work is oriented towards supporting teachers to include and relate to Aboriginal families, who are cultural minorities in Australia. Howard suggests that to be culturally responsive we must know our practice, our students, and ourselves. We must have passion, competence and responsibility. We must be rigorous, responsive and pay attention to the quality of our relationships. Howard refers to such practice

as transformationist pedagogy. We become transformationist when we enter into I/Thou relationship. We are *then* being culturally responsive. We respond to Others who teach us about their cultures, values, connections and relationships. We have been shown by Caroline and her Aboriginal colleagues, Gemma and Sarah and their students, my students and their families, Catherine and her family, and the Aboriginal Elders, that they own their culture. It is our job to respond, include, embrace, and relate. We listen with the whole of our Being — the baskets are never empty.

Alison Pryer tells us in her article, “ ‘What spring does with the cherry trees’: The eros of teaching and learning” (2001) that “Teaching and learning are erotic acts. The processes of teaching and learning involve the ecstatic abandonment of Self to the Other” (p.75). Pedagogic principles of *eros* and hope support us, like the cherry trees that burst forth in spring, to become fully participatory pedagogic beings.

Good pedagogy, and understanding it through its ontology, axiology and epistemology, leads us into a process of “deep engagement with authentic identity and one’s own intellectual efficacy” (Howard, 2006, p.133)? Let us we teach who we best can be. Let us strive for pedagogic good when we teach who we are becoming — conscious, whole, relational persons. This is my invitation to myself and my community.

### **Being, becoming and belonging**

Jardine urges us to “take the time to compose ourselves in the midst of the wor(l)d(s) it breaks open” (2014, p.22). Jardine refers to words and worlds “that break open” when we take time, and reminds us that “We write in order to become experienced” (p.22). My writing is an act of becoming experienced. It helps me to weave my stories, to bring form to what is hidden, and to become more fully an agent of *noematic* truthfulness. Jardine cites Gadamer on being experienced,

Being experienced” does not consist in the fact that someone already knows everything and knows better than anyone else. Rather, the experienced person proves to be, on the contrary, someone who, because of the many experiences

he has had and the knowledge he has drawn from them, is particularly well equipped to have new experiences and to learn from them. Experience has its proper fulfilment not in definitive knowledge but in the openness to experience that is made possible by experience itself. (Gadamer, 1989, p.355)

Writing about my most recent breathwork session illustrates this point. A world broke open for me as I entered the realm of my unconscious. I became open to experience made possible by the experience itself, responded to my unconscious Self in an I/Thou relationship that is intense, exploratory and self-transformational, and moved towards Being, becoming, and belonging to the Whole. Todd tells us our sense of Other is not always outside ourselves, “it comes via the otherness of the Self, the unconscious” (2001, p.447). The “play of uncertainty” that is the pedagogical creative tension between Self and Other occurs within “a different kind of relationship” with our unconscious (p.447).

I entered an enhanced state of awareness when I breathed in the Holotropic breathwork manner and accessed dimensions of the human psyche that are not always available to me in my ordinary, hylotropic, non-enhanced state. I became acutely aware of empty intendings, forgotten or hidden aspects of my life that once again, became filled. Old memories came forth to remind me that my body holds information I am not usually aware of. I recalled from my session,

My mouth and jaw start to quiver. My lifetime traumas unfold before me, of having smashed teeth from a childhood accident, of enduring years of wearing braces, of having mouth surgery, of being hit in the mouth with a cricket bat, of being hit in the mouth with the back of a hand, of being shy, of not having courage to speak, of not using my voice. These traumas have taken its toll on my body and psyche.

I became more aware of the impact trauma has had on my Being, hidden from me until the breathwork session. Revealed to me through my own breath and body was my fear of self expression linked to smashed teeth and surgery, My body and psyche worked together to show that they are so connected that physical trauma is somehow linked to emotional trauma, permitting me to see a possibility for healing trauma released from memory.

Releasing the stored tensions in my body I found myself released to write more freely than I have ever before — to write to experience, interpret, understand, heal, and “let the thoughts jump out of the baskets onto all of us.” Acts of exploring and experiencing in non-ordinary states helped my writing to flow.

I am carried and transported by the beauty and power of the music. This is no ordinary experience. I see, feel and taste the beauty of the rain dripping from the leaves on the trees outside. My senses are heightened. My everyday concerns seem less compellingly important. I am connected, I am becoming, and I belong.

Breathwork is a contemplative practice. Olen Gunlaugson, Edward W Sarath, Charles Scott and Heesoon Bai introduce contemplative learning and inquiry in *An Introduction to Contemplative Learning and Inquiry across Disciplines* (2014). They point out that scholars and practitioners are taking inspiration from world wisdom traditions, new branches of scientific thought, social sciences and business in “advocating approaches to teaching and learning that affirm the significance of cultivating individual and collective forms of enhanced intelligence, wisdom, and well-being through contemplative ways of knowing” (p.3). Contemplative practices, they say, “help focus the mind and facilitate awareness of both inner and outer worlds and our fruitful engagements in them” (p.2). These practices significantly contribute to deepening our awareness of and engagement with Self, Others and the world.

Sarah, Catherine, Gemma and the many teachers, Elders and parents who “participated in Mind” (Davis et al., 2000, p.160), who helped us to think the world together, have told their stories in this thesis. They attest to the transformative nature of the contemplative practices described in this thesis as we explored how we could become pedagogic beings.

## Understanding ourselves as pedagogic beings: Doing, becoming, and knowing pedagogy

As I mentioned in Chapter One, we are reminded by Gallagher (1992) that, “Self-transcendence is an opening out toward one’s own possibilities, a venturing into the unknown” (p.182). He says, “We, as learners, find our own significance, our own sense of ourselves, only through a process that is both a transcendence and a submission to and participation in the play of experience” (p.183). Gadamer’s understanding of “participation”, to which Gallagher refers to, rather than meaning merely to take part, as the term may suggest, is, “A way of being taken up into the whole” (1992, p.183). Pedagogic relating is intense. It is not for the faint-hearted. It is both ineffable and infinite.

Pedagogical relating might be experienced as participating communally like this, “being taking up into the whole”, lovingly. The whole with its internal complexities of parts and pieces and sides and parameters thus permits pedagogic relating to be an act of love. When we love we pay full attention, we are taken up into the whole. M. Scott Peck reminds us “The principal form that the work of love takes is attention” (1983, p.128). Love “requires the extension of ourselves, love is always either work or courage. If an act is not one of work or courage, then it is not love” (p.128). In this wholeness where pedagogy thrives, each would need to learn to say, I respond with my whole Being to You.

## How do we know, and how do we love?

Rumi tells us in the poem *I am Life itself* that, as “prisoners of a little pond”, we live in a world of ignorance. I strive to see how my ignorance keeps me in the little pond of positivist thought, the dwelling place of our Western minds. I dare to venture forth and set sail on Rumi’s ocean of ‘Life itself’. I dare to join Life to merge and leave behind my contracted small pond, small mind, and small world ways. Life will “open the gate to my love”. I return to the poem where I began. I have set sail and dived into the ocean of my lifeworld. Life continues to open the gates to my love as I *live* what my thesis has brought into my comprehension.

Rumi attempts to describe the meaning of love in this next poem.

Both light and shadow  
are the dance of Love.  
Love has no cause;  
it is the astrolabe of God's secrets.  
Lover and Loving are inseparable  
and timeless.

Although I may try to describe Love  
when I experience it I am speechless.  
Although I may try to write about Love  
I am rendered helpless;  
my pen breaks and the paper slips away  
at the ineffable place  
where Lover, Loving and Loved are one.

Every moment is made glorious  
by the light of Love.

Rumi

I discover that every pedagogic moment is made glorious by the light of love.

Ian Baker writes of his adventures and his inner and outer discoveries in his compelling book *The Heart of the World: A Journey to Tibet's Lost Paradise* (2004). His outer journey took him on a search for one of the most sacred Tibetan waterfalls in the deep and remote Tsangpo Gorge and its deeper heartland at a time when much of Tibet was under threat of relentless development by the Chinese Government that destroyed so many of its gorges and replaced them with dams for industry. He returned from his adventures to recall, as he ran a bath in his apartment,

With the chrome taps open wide, and the wild thundering of the waterfall still within me, I could only hope those radiant waters, hidden in our deepest collective being, would never be dammed or diverted but — like the dream of unknown places — carry us beyond all divisions into the currents of the unbound heart. (Baker, 2004, p.436)

I share Baker's hope that the "radiant waters" of our collective Being carry us into the currents of our unbound heart.

As this thesis arrives at its ending, I find in the words of T.S Eliott that in arriving it is as if I know this place for the first time, and I am about to start again. I learn to listen for the voice of the hidden waterfall.

We shall cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.  
Through the unknown, remembered gate  
When the last of earth left to discover  
Is that which was the beginning;  
At the source of the longest river  
The voice of the hidden waterfall  
And the children in the apple tree.

T.S. Eliot. "Little Gidding". *The Four Quartets*

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